

FABLES AND EPIGRAMS;

WITH

ESSAYS

ON FABLE AND EPIGRAM.

Gottfried Lessing
FROM THE GERMAN OF LESSING.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

ALTHOUGH several of the Fables of Lessing, so celebrated for their naïveté and precision, may have appeared in an English dress, they have never before been translated as a collection. The present version is furnished, not only in consequence of their character as fables, but with a view to the very able accompanying Essay, the principles of which they so well serve to enforce and illustrate. The Essay on Epigram also, although less directly connected with the brief selection of epigrams that precedes it, possesses a kindred merit to that upon fable ; and both have been comprised in the present small volume, which is submitted to the English reader, as supplying neat and admirable specimens of the analytical and philosophical acuteness of an eminent author, in a department of criticism in which he has a great and merited celebrity, not only among his countrymen, but with Europe at large.

U of M Bindery

APR 24 '58

Goodspeed

SEP 4 '41

EXTRACT
ON
THE SUBJECT OF FABLE,
FROM
THE GENERAL PREFACE OF LESSING TO HIS
COLLECTED WORKS.

I HAVE studied no species of poetry more maturely than the fable. Pleased with this common field of invention and morals, I have made myself master of all the ancient and modern fabulists, and have read the best of them several times. Having duly reflected on the theory of fable, I was surprised that the simple course of Esop, which leads directly to truth, should be deserted by the moderns for the by-path of a flowery and gossiping mode of narrative ; and, in consequence, I was led to make several attempts in the unaffected manner of the old Phrygian, until, at length, I considered myself so rich in materials, as to be able, with little trouble, to give my fables the new form which I had meditated.

I commenced my undertaking,—but how much was I deceived as to the trouble ! Passing thoughts which occur while reading, and which are put on paper only in distrust of memory,—thoughts which we are content merely to possess as matter for mental exercise, altogether careless of the necessary precision of expression,—require considerable labour to be made fit for publication. What sort of a book have I finally made of mine ?—Reader, it is before you.

Without prescribing the point of view in which I should prefer being considered, I will merely request those who peruse me, not to pronounce on these Fables without reading

the Essay which accompanies them. Although I neither wrote the Fables for the Essay, nor the Essay for the Fables, yet as they rose spontaneously at one and the same time, in one and the same mind, they so far illustrate each other as not to be very different things, when separately and jointly considered. In comparing them together, should the reader even discover that my rules do not always harmonize with my practice, he will be aware, beforehand, that genius has its caprices; that it seldom very closely follows rules; and that the latter may indeed prune the exuberance of the former, but ought not to impede its growth.

Let the reader judge of his own taste by the Fables, and of my arguments by the Essay.

FABLES.

FABLE I.

THE VISION.

IN one of the lonely recesses of that forest in which the discourse of prattling animals has so frequently reached my ear, I reclined beside a murmuring waterfall, and endeavoured to emulate La Fontaine by clothing one of my stories in the poetical drapery of rhyme. I pondered, selected, and rejected; my temples throbbed with exertion; but all in vain, the paper still retained its purity. Full of anger, I abruptly arose, when behold she herself—the Muse of Fable, stood before me, and smilingly exclaimed: “My pupil, why all this useless labour? Truth requires the graceful aid of fable, but needs fable the ornament of rhyme? You would paint the lily, and add fragrance to spices. Enough, that the invention of fable belongs to the poet, be the delivery

of it that of the historian, its moral that of the philosopher." I intended to answer, but the Muse had disappeared. "Disappeared!" I hear the reader exclaim: "Fatigue us with a less insipid deception than the common one, of putting into the mouth of a Muse conclusions which originate in your own imbecility." "Well said, reader; no Muse appeared, I have related a simple fable, from which you have yourself extracted the moral; I am not the first, nor shall I be the last, who transforms his own fancies into the oracular utterance of a divine inspiring power."

FABLE II.

DISPUTE OF THE ANIMALS FOR PRECEDENCY.

(In four Fables.)

I.

A WARM dispute arose among the beasts of the forest, on the subject of rank. "Let us choose the man for our arbitrator," said the hare; "he is not one of the contending parties, and can therefore be more impartial." "Has he sufficient understanding for it?" exclaimed the mole: "in order to estimate our often deeply concealed perfections, he should possess the most acute sensibility."

"Wisely observed," added the mouse. "Certainly," said the eel, "I cannot myself believe that he possesses sufficient penetration." "Silence," rejoined the horse; "it is well known that he who has the least confidence in the justness of his claim, is always prepared to doubt the discernment of his judge."

II.

THE man was constituted judge. "One question only," said the majestic lion, "before you pronounce judgment. According to what rule will you, O man, determine our claims to distinction?" "According to what rule?" exclaimed the man, "undoubtedly according to the degree in which you are of use to me." "Excellent!" replied the offended lion; "in that case, I shall be ranked much below the ass! Man, you cannot be our judge! Leave the assembly."

III.

THE man retired. "So," said the mole, ironically, (and the mouse and the eel again joined him,) "you perceive, horse, the lion is also of opinion, that the man is not qualified to be our judge. The lion thinks like ourselves." "But for very different reasons," exclaimed the lion, with a look of contempt.

IV.

THE lion continued — “ The dispute, when rightly considered, is a worthless one. Assign the highest or the lowest place to me, it is the same thing, it is enough that I know *myself* ;” and he quitted the assembly.

The wise elephant, the daring tiger, the solemn bear, the cunning fox, the noble horse, in short, all who felt or fancied their own value, followed the lion. The last to leave, and those who expressed the most dissatisfaction at the abrupt termination of the meeting, were the ass and the monkey.

FABLE III.

THE FURIES.

“ My furies,” said Pluto, to the messenger of the gods, “ are getting old and infirm, I wish for new ones ; ascend therefore to the regions of the earth, and find me three active women.” Mercury departed. Soon after, Juno said to Iris, her attendant, “ Do you think, Iris, you could find among mortals, two or three strict and virtuous maidens, perfectly correct—you understand me—

that I may bid defiance to Venus, who boasts of her subjugation of the whole female sex?" Iris obeyed. What part of the world did not the indefatigable Iris explore; but all in vain. Juno, perceiving her return alone, exclaimed, "Is it possible? O chastity! O virtue!" "Goddess," answered Iris, "I might have brought you three maidens, all of whom are strict and chaste, and neither of whom has ever smiled on man, all three having stifled every spark of love in their bosoms, but I arrived too late."

"Too late," replied Juno, "how so?" "Why, Mercury had just before taken them to Pluto!" "Indeed! for what does Pluto want prudes?" "For furies."

FABLE IV.

THE ASS AND THE WOLF.

AN ass once met a hungry wolf. "Have pity on me," said the trembling ass; "I am a poor infirm animal: see what a thorn I have run into my foot." "You really distress me," replied the wolf, "and I feel myself conscientiously bound to release you from your pain." The words were no sooner uttered, than the ass was torn to pieces.

FABLE V.

THE FOX AND THE TIGER.

“ I SHOULD highly prize your swiftness and strength,” said a fox one day to a tiger. “ And do I possess nothing else which would suit you ?” asked the tiger. “ I am not aware of any.” “ What, would not my handsome skin please you ? it is variegated like your mind, so that your inside and outside would correspond.” “ For which very reason I beg to decline it,” returned the fox ; “ so far from being desirous to appear what I am, I wish that I could exchange my hair for feathers.”

FABLE VI.

THE BOY AND THE SERPENT.

A BOY who was playing with a tame serpent, said to it : “ My dear creature, I should not be so familiar were you not deprived of your poison. You serpents are the most wicked and ungrateful of beings. I have read what once happened to a poor countryman who compassionately took up, and warmed in his bosom, a half frozen serpent, perhaps one of your forefathers, which he

found behind a hedge. No sooner had the vile reptile recovered sensation and strength, than it stung its benefactor, and caused the good man's death."

"I am surprised," answered the serpent, "at the partiality of your historians, for *ours* repeat the affair quite differently. Your honest man imagined the serpent to be frozen to death, and being one of the variegated species, he took it home in order to strip off its beautiful skin."

"O, I pray, be silent," returned the boy; "ingratitude is never at a loss for an excuse." "Right, my child," cried his father, who had been listening to the conversation; "but, nevertheless, whenever you hear of a case of extraordinary ingratitude, examine all the circumstances before you brand any man with so odious an imputation. True benefactors seldom oblige the ungrateful; for the credit of human nature, I will say *never*. Those who are actuated by mean and selfish motives merit ingratitude instead of acknowledgment. It is their lawful reward."

FABLE VII.

THE LION WITH THE ASS.

WHEN the lion took the ass into the woods in order to assist him in the chase by scaring the animals with his frightful voice, a foolish crow exclaimed, "Truly a fine companion! are you not ashamed to walk with an ass?" "He whom I can *use*, may walk by my side," returned the lion. A thought very common with the great, when they associate with their inferiors.

FABLE VIII.

THE ASS WITH THE LION.

WHEN the ass accompanied Esop's lion into the woods, as aforesaid, he met another ass of his acquaintance, who said, "Good morrow, brother." "What assurance!" was the reply. "Why so?" said the other; "because you walk with the lion, are you less an ass?"

FABLE IX.

THE MAN AND THE DOG.

A MAN who was bitten by a dog, flew into a passion and killed it. The wound appearing dangerous, a surgeon was deemed necessary. "I am not acquainted with a better remedy," said the latter, "than that of dipping a piece of bread in the wound, and causing the mischievous dog to eat it. If that sympathetic prescription avail not, then"—here the surgeon shrugged up his shoulders—"O, fatal anger," exclaimed the man, "*I have killed the dog!*"

FABLE X.

THE MONKEY AND THE FOX.

"NAME me an animal so clever, that I cannot imitate it," boasted the monkey to the fox. "Can you point out any animal so insignificant, as to imitate you?" runs the answer. Ye authors of a certain class, need I explain myself further?

FABLE XI.

ÆSOP AND THE ASS.

“WHEN you again tell any stories concerning me,” said the ass to Æsop, “pray make me say something smart and witty.” “In that case,” replied Æsop, “will not people say that you are the moralist, and I the ass?”

FABLE XII.

THE SICK WOLF.

THE wolf being at the point of death, cast a retrospective glance on his past life. “I am certainly a sinner,” he plaintively observed, “but, I trust, not one of the greatest. I have doubtless committed evil; but I have also done much good. I remember that once when a lamb, which had strayed from the flock, came so near me, I might have devoured it with the greatest ease; I forbore to do so. About the same time I listened to the abuse of an angry sheep with the most edifying indifference, although no watch-dog was to be feared.” “To all this I can bear witness,” said the fox, who was assisting his ghostly preparations; “I

recollect all the particulars. It was just at the time you suffered so much from the bone in your throat."

FABLE XIII.

THE ASSES.

THE asses complained to Jove that men treated them with cruelty. "Our backs," exclaimed they, "support load sunder which they and less strong animals would succumb; and yet they would mercilessly beat us into a degree of speed which the burdens we bear render impossible, even if nature had not refused us the required capacity. Forbid them, Jove, to be thus unjust; if withheld from doing evil, we wish to serve them, for to serve them hast thou created us."

"My creatures," answered Jove, "your request is not unreasonable; but there is no possibility of convincing men that your natural slowness is not indolence; and so long as they thus imagine, they will beat you. However, there is another way to ameliorate your distress. The power of endurance shall henceforth be your lot; your skin shall harden against their stripes, and weary the arm of the driver." "Jove," exclaimed the asses, "thou art for ever wise and merciful;" and they

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departed from his presence as from the throne of universal love.

FABLE XIV.

THE MISER.

“UNFORTUNATE man that I am!” ejaculated a miser to his neighbour; “some one, last night, stole my treasure, which I had buried in my garden, and placed a worthless stone in its place.”

“You would never have used your treasure,” returned his neighbour, “only, therefore, imagine the stone to be your treasure, and you are nothing the worse.” “Nothing the worse! And suppose it was so, is not somebody else the better—somebody else the better? I shall go distracted!”

FABLE XV.

THE SHEEP.

WHEN Jupiter solemnized the feast of his nuptials, and all the animals made donations, Juno missed the sheep.

“Where is the sheep?” inquired the goddess. “Why is the pious sheep so tardy in his offering?” The dog started up and said, “Be not angry,

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goddess, I this day saw the sheep, which grieved and wept bitterly."

"And wherefore wept the sheep?" exclaimed the goddess, already moved with pity.

"It thus exclaimed," returned the dog: "Poor as I am, I have at present neither wool nor milk, what shall I offer to Jupiter? Can I alone appear before him without a gift? I will repair to the shepherd, and request him rather to offer up myself as a sacrifice."

At this moment the smoke of the sacrificed sheep ascended with grateful odour to Jupiter, and penetrated through the clouds, bearing the prayers of the shepherd.

Juno would, for the first time, have shed tears, could tears bedew immortal eyes.

FABLE XVI.

THE HISTORY OF AN OLD WOLF.

(In seven Fables.)

I.

THE rapacious wolf, advanced in years, formed the hypocritical resolution of endeavouring to cajole the shepherds; and, in the first instance, repaired to him whose flock was nearest to his den.

"Shepherd," said he, "you call me a blood-

thirsty felon, which I really am not. No doubt, when I am hungry, I have recourse to your sheep, for hunger is unbearable. Protect me from hunger, feed me well, and you shall have no cause to complain; for I assure you that I am the most tame and tender of animals when my appetite is satisfied."

"When your appetite is satisfied," answered the shepherd; "but is it ever satisfied? You and the miser have never enough; go your way!"

II.

THUS discarded, the wolf applied to a second shepherd; and accosting him, "Shepherd, you need not be told that I can kill many of your sheep in the course of a year. Will you allow me six sheep at once, every year, discard your dogs, and sleep in peace?"

"Six sheep!" replied the shepherd, "why that is a whole flock!"

"Well, as it is you," rejoined the wolf, "I will be satisfied with five."

"Five sheep! in the whole year, I scarcely sacrifice more than five sheep to Pan."

"Then four?" continued the wolf, while the shepherd shook his head—"Three? two?"—

"Not one," was the shepherd's answer: "I will never be so foolish as to pay tribute to an enemy,

against whom I can protect myself by my own vigilance."

III.

THREE is a lucky number, thought the wolf, and repaired to a third shepherd. "I am much grieved," said he, "that I am looked upon by you shepherds as the most cruel and remorseless of animals. I will prove to you how much I am wronged. Give me a sheep every year, and your flock shall graze in safety in yonder forest, which I alone make unsafe. One sheep only—what a trifle! Can I be more moderate? can I deal more disinterestedly?—You laugh, shepherd, what excites your mirth?"

"O, nothing, but how old are you, my good friend?" replied the shepherd. "How can my age concern you? I am quite young enough to kill your finest sheep," growled the Wolf. "Do not grow angry, old Isgrim; I am sorry that you come with your proposal seven years too late. Your broken teeth betray you; you are disinterested only in the hope of feeding more comfortably and with less danger."

IV.

THE wolf became very surly, but composed himself, and sought the fourth shepherd, who having just lost his faithful dog, he deemed the

opportunity favourable. "Shepherd," he began, "I have quarrelled with my brethren in the woods, and shall never be reconciled to them; you know how much you have to fear in that quarter; but take me into your service, in the place of your deceased dog, and I pledge myself that they shall no longer look suspiciously on your sheep." "You wish," replied the shepherd, "to protect my sheep from your brethren in the woods!" "Certainly. What else can I mean?" "That might do well enough," rejoined the shepherd, "but who, in that event, is to protect my poor sheep against you? The expedient of taking a thief into the house to protect us from thieves out of it, we men consider—" "I understand you," interrupted the wolf, "you are beginning to moralize—good day."

V.

"If I were not so old!" muttered the wolf, "but, alas! I must yield to time!" and so he proceeded to the fifth shepherd. "Do you know me, shepherd?" asked the wolf. "I at least am acquainted with your equals," returned the shepherd.

"My equals! that I much doubt; I am a very singular wolf, and worthy of your friendship and that of the other shepherds."

“ Indeed ! in what does your singularity consist ? ”

“ I could not murder and devour a living sheep, even to save my life—I feed on mutton only. Is not that praiseworthy ? Allow me, therefore, to call now and then on your flock, to inquire whether—”

“ Spare your civility,” answered the shepherd. “ If I am no longer to be your enemy, you must refrain from feeding on sheep, dead or alive. A beast who feeds on dead sheep, when hungry will be tempted to regard sick ones as dead, and healthy ones as ailing. Do not therefore count on my friendship—but begone.”

VI.

I MUST now venture every thing to attain my purpose, thought the wolf, as he repaired to the sixth shepherd.

“ Shepherd, how do you like my skin ? ” demanded the wolf.

“ Your skin ? ” answered the shepherd, “ let me see ; it is a very handsome one ; the dogs have but seldom assailed you.”

“ Well then, listen shepherd : I am old, and cannot go on thus much longer, feed me until I die, and I will bequeath you my skin.”

“ How,” said the shepherd, “ have you found

out the miserly trick of selling the skin on the back? No, no; your skin would in the end cost me more than it is worth; but if you are resolved to make me a present of it, give it me now."—So saying, the shepherd grasped a spear, and the wolf took to flight.

"O! the merciless crew," exclaimed the wolf, in extreme rage; "I will die as becomes their enemy before I am killed with hunger; they will not have it otherwise."

He immediately ran back into the dwellings of the shepherds, attacked and tore their children to pieces; and it was with much trouble that the shepherds at length killed him. "We have acted indiscreetly," said the wisest among them; "we should not have driven the old robber to the last extremity, forced and late as his repentance was."

FABLE XVII.

THE OAK TREE.

ONE stormy night the raging north wind exercised its strength on a lofty oak, which it levelled with the ground, where it lay with many small trees crushed beneath it. A fox, whose den was not far distant, happened to pass the next morning: "What a noble tree!" exclaimed

he ; "I never thought it so great while standing."

FABLE XVIII.

BENEVOLENT DEEDS.

(In two Fables.)

I.

"HAVE you a greater benefactor among animals than ourselves?" said the bee one day to the man. "Yes, certainly," answered the latter. "Name it." "The sheep : its wool is necessary, while your honey is only pleasant."

II.

"Do you require another reason ?—the sheep bestows his wool very graciously ; but when I gather your honey, I am obliged to guard against your sting."

FABLE XIX.

THE BEAR AND THE ELEPHANT.

"O THESE stupid men !" said the bear to the elephant, "what do they not require from us superior animals ? I must dance to their music—

I, the serious bear ; although they know full well that such fooleries do not accord with my dignified nature. Why then laugh when I dance ?” “ I also dance to their music,” replied the learned elephant, “ who am believed to be as grave and as dignified as yourself ; yet the spectators never laugh at me, their countenances express only complacency and admiration. Believe me, dear Bruin, men do not laugh at you because you dance, but because you dance awkwardly.”

FABLE XX.

THE GIFT OF THE FAIRIES.

Two benevolent fairies approached the cradle of a young prince, who afterwards became one of the greatest monarchs of his country.

“ I bestow on this, my favourite,” said the first of them, “ the quick sight of the eagle, from which the smallest fly cannot escape throughout the wide extent of his dominions.”

“ The gift is a handsome one,” replied the second fairy ; “ the prince will become a clear-sighted monarch ; but the eagle possesses not only the power of discerning the smallest animals, but a noble contempt for the pursuit of them. Let the prince take the latter gift from me.”

“ I thank you, sister, for this wise restriction,” replied the first fairy; “ many princes would have been greater monarchs had they not wasted their penetration upon the most trivial concerns.”

FABLE XXI.

THE MARMOSET AND THE ANT.

“ PITIABLE ants,” said the marmoset, “ are you sufficiently rewarded for the labour of the whole summer by that trifling store? If you were to see my hoard !” —

“ Listen to me,” answered an ant : “ if your stock exceeds your wants, then are men justified in digging after your supplies, and making you pay with your life for your rapacity.”

FABLE XXII.

THE LION AND THE HARE.

A LION once honoured a silly hare with his intimacy. “ Is it really true,” inquired the hare, familiarly, “ that a wretched cock can scare you lions into flight by merely crowing ?”

“ It is very true,” replied the lion, “ and it

may be generally observed, that all of us great animals are subject to some trifling weakness; for instance, you must have heard that the grunts of swine excite surprise and horror in the elephant."

"Indeed!" answered the hare, "then it is easy to conceive why hares are so terribly alarmed at dogs."

FABLE XXIII.

THE ASS AND THE HUNTER.

AN ass had the presumption to run a race with a horse which had been brought up to the chase. The attempt ended miserably, and the ass was laughed at. "The reason of my failure is plain," said the latter, "a few months ago I ran a thorn into my foot, and it pains me still."

"Excuse me," said the Rev. — "my sermon is not so sound and edifying as might be expected from a successor of the Apostles, but I have had a sore throat for a week past."

FABLE XXIV.

JUPITER AND THE HORSE.

"FATHER of men and beasts!" said the horse, approaching the throne of Jupiter, "I am pro-

nounced one of the most beautiful animals with which thou hast favoured the world, and self-love induces me to join in the opinion; but still in many particulars I might be improved."

"And what dost thou suppose improvable? Speak; I want to receive instructions," said the benignant god, with a smile.

"I should perhaps," continued the horse, "be more speedy were my legs longer and more slender. An arched neck, like that of the graceful swan, might not be unbecoming. A broader chest would increase my strength; and finally, as thou hast created me to carry man, thy favourite, I might as well be formed with a natural saddle, in lieu of that which my benevolent rider places on my back."

"Well," said Jupiter, "wait a moment." With an awful countenance the god then pronounced the fiat of creation; the dust of the earth became pregnant with life; matter assumed form and organization, and suddenly there started up before his throne—the ugly camel!

The horse beheld the new formed animal, and trembled with horror and aversion.

"Here are larger and more slender legs," observed Jupiter, "the neck of the swan, the broader bosom, and the useful saddle. Wilt thou, horse, be of this form?"

The horse did not cease to tremble.

“Go ;” continued Jupiter, “and for this time receive instruction without punishment. However, to remind thee now and then of thy temerity, this new creature shall continue to exist.” Jupiter then cast on the camel a look of preservation, and exclaimed : “Never shall the horse behold thee without horror.”

FABLE XXV.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE PEACOCK.

A SOCIAL nightingale found among the singers of the wood many enviers, but no friends. “Perhaps, I shall find one in another species,” said the nightingale, and flew with confidence to the peacock.

“Handsome peacock, I exceedingly admire you.” “And I equally admire you, lovely nightingale,” exclaimed the one to the other. “Then let us be friends,” continued the latter; “we shall not be tempted to envy each other. You are as agreeable to the eye as I am to the ear.”

Kneller and Pope were better friends to each other than Pope and Addison.

FABLE XXVI.

THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERD.

A SHEPHERD lost his whole flock by an infectious distemper. The wolf was made acquainted with the misfortune, and came to offer his condolence. "Shepherd," he exclaimed, "is it true that so great a calamity has befallen you? Have you lost your whole flock—that flock so amiable, pious, and well conditioned? I could shed tears of blood, I so much pity you."

"Thank you, sir," replied the shepherd, "I see that you possess a compassionate heart."

"No doubt of it," added Hylax, the shepherd's dog, "whenever he himself suffers by the misfortunes of his neighbours."

FABLE XXVII.

THE HORSE AND THE BULL.

A BOY once proudly galloped on the back of a high-spirited horse. "How shameful!" exclaimed the wild bull to the steed; "I would not be thus ruled by a boy!" "But I will," replied the horse; "what honour shall I acquire by throwing off a boy?"

FABLE XXVIII.

THE CRICKET AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

“ I ASSURE you,” said the cricket to the nightingale, “ that my singing by no means wants admirers.” “ Who are they ?” said the nightingale. “ The industrious reapers,” answered the cricket, “ listen to me with pleasure ; and that these are the most useful people among mankind, you will certainly not deny.”

“ No, truly,” rejoined the nightingale ; “ but nevertheless you ought not be proud of their applause. Industrious people, all whose thoughts are employed on their labour, must necessarily be deficient in more refined perceptions. Do not therefore value yourself on your singing, until you induce the jocund shepherd, who plays the pipe himself so delightfully, to listen to you with silent admiration.”

FABLE XXIX.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE HAWK.

A MELLIFLUOUS nightingale was one day pounced upon by a hawk. “ As you sing so charmingly,” he exclaimed, “ how deliciously must you taste !”

Was this irony or simplicity in the hawk ? I cannot decide ; but yesterday I heard some one observe, the woman who writes such excellent poetry must be very amiable. This was certainly simplicity.

FABLE XXX.

THE MARTIAL WOLF.

“ My father of honourable memory,” said a young wolf to a fox, “ was a real hero, and the terror of the whole neighbourhood. He trampled over two hundred enemies in succession, and hurled their dark souls to the kingdom of destruction. How wonderful, that he should at last be defeated by one !”

“ Such may be the language of his funeral eulogy,” returned the fox, “ but the impartial historian will add, that the two hundred enemies over whom he trampled in succession, were sheep and asses, and that he was defeated the first time he had the audacity to attack a bull.”

FABLE XXXI.

THE PHŒNIX.

AFTER a lapse of many centuries, the phoenix again made his appearance. He appeared, and

all the birds and beasts collected round him. They gazed, wondered, admired, and at last burst out into rapturous applause.

Soon, however, the countenances of the most considerate and social among them assumed an aspect of compassion; and sighing, they exclaimed: "The unfortunate phoenix! it is his hard lot to be alone in the world. The only one of his species, he has neither lovers nor friends."

FABLE XXXII.

THE GOOSE.

THE feathers of a goose exceeded in whiteness the new fallen snow. Proud of this dazzling gift of nature, she thought to herself she would affect to be a swan. Separating herself from her equals, she swam in majestic solitude round the pond. Now she stretched her neck, the betraying shortness of which she vainly endeavoured to rectify; now she tried to give it the fine bend which bestows upon the swan the dignified appearance of the bird of Apollo. In vain, the neck was too stiff; and after all her trouble, she only succeeded so far as, without approaching the swan, to become a more ridiculous goose.

FABLE XXXIII.

THE OAK TREE AND THE SWINE.

A GREEDY swine fed under a lofty oak, on the fruit which plentifully fell from its boughs ; and while he cracked one acorn with his teeth devoured another with his eyes.

“ Ungrateful beast !” exclaimed the oak, “ you feed rapaciously on my fruit, without casting up one grateful look to me !”

The swine was silent for a moment, and then grunted an answer : “ My grateful look should not be wanting, was I certain that you threw down your acorns for the love of me.”

FABLE XXXIV.

THE WASPS.

A PROUD war horse was slain beneath its rider, and the body soon became a prey to putrefaction and decay.

Ever active nature uses the ruins of one thing for the production of another ; so a swarm of young wasps soon sprang up in the mouldering carcass. “ Oh !” exclaimed the wasps, “ what a divine origin is ours. The favourite of Neptune, the magnificent horse, is our originator !”

The listening Fabulist overheard this singular boasting, and thought on the modern Italians, who regard themselves as nothing less than the descendants of the conquering Romans, because born amid their graves.

FABLE XXXV.

THE SPARROWS.

AN old church, in which the sparrows built numerous nests, was repaired. On its appearance with renovated splendour, the sparrows returned to seek their ancient nooks, but found the whole of them closed. "Where is the use of this great edifice, if such be the case?" exclaimed the sparrows: "Come, let us quit this useless heap of stones."

FABLE XXXVI.

THE OSTRICH.

"I AM going to fly," exclaimed the gigantic ostrich, while the whole family of birds stood around him in anxious expectation.

"I am going to fly," he again exclaimed, widely spreading his insufficient wings, and speeding for-

ward like a ship with expanded sails, without quitting the ground for a moment.

In this effort, we may trace a poetical likeness of those unpoetical minds, who anticipate extraordinary flight in the opening of their vapid odes, and threaten to ascend above the clouds and stars, yet remain eternally attached to the earth.

FABLE XXXVII.

THE SPARROW AND THE OSTRICH.

“BE as proud of your greatness and of your strength as you please,” said the sparrow to the ostrich, “I am more of a bird than you are; for you cannot fly, whereas I can, although not to the clouds.”

The insignificant poet of a cheerful song or a small ballad, is more of a genius than the spiritless author of a wearisome epic poem.

FABLE XXXVIII.

THE DOGS.

“How degenerate is our race in this country!” said the spaniel. “In the remote part of the world which men call India, there exist genuine dogs.”

My brethren, you will scarcely believe me,—and yet I have seen it with my own eyes,—dogs who will boldly attack the lion.”

“But do they conquer him?” inquired a grave and steady sporting dog. “Conquer him? That I cannot undertake to say; but then only think—attack a lion!”

“Oh!” continued the sporting dog, “if they do not conquer him, your so highly praised Indian dogs are no way superior to ourselves; but, on the contrary, a great deal more stupid.”

FABLE XXXIX.

THE FOX AND THE STORK.

“TELL me something of the many distant countries you have visited,” said the fox to the far-journeying stork. The stork began to name to him each slough and marshy meadow in which he used to feed on the most savoury worms and fattest frogs.

You have resided some time in Paris, sir, where do you get the best dinners? Whose wines have you found of the best flavour?

FABLE XL.

THE OWL AND THE TREASURE-SEEKER.

THIS treasure-seeker was a very indefatigable man; he ventured into the ruins of an old castle, formerly haunted by robbers, but instead of the treasures which he sought, found nothing but a solitary owl, who had seized, and was devouring a miserable mouse. "Is this beooming the favourite bird of Minerva?" asked the intruder. "Why not?" replied the owl. "Because I love silent contemplation, am I therefore to live on air? Certainly, I know it is what some of you men expect from learned people."

FABLE XLI.

THE YOUNG SWALLOW.

"WHAT are you employed about?" asked a young swallow of the busy ants. "We collect provision for the winter," was the ready answer.

"That is very prudent," said the swallow, "I will do the same;" and she immediately began to carry to her nest a great number of dead flies and spiders.

"What are all these for?" said the old swallow,

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its mother. "What for, dear mother? it is provision for the winter; gather you also, I have taken this lesson from the ant."

"O leave this same prudence," answered the old swallow, "to the ants; what is suitable to them, is not so to the superior race of swallows. All-bountiful nature has allotted to us a more favourable fate. When the plentiful summer is over we remove hence, and on our journey fall asleep, when warm caverns receive us, where we repose without wanting any thing until spring awakens us to new life."

FABLE XLII.

THE MEROPS.

"ALLOW me to ask you a question," said a young eagle to an acute and profoundly learned owl. "They say that there is a bird of the name of Merops, which, when it ascends into the air, flies with his tail towards the skies, and his head downwards toward the earth. Is this true?"

"It is not," replied the owl, "but only the foolish invention of man. He is himself the fabled Merops, for he too frequently wishes to reach heaven in his flights, without for a moment losing sight of the earth."

FABLE XLIII.

THE PELICAN.

PARENTS cannot be too attentive to meritorious children ; but if a short-sighted parent ruins himself for the sake of an extravagant son, his affection becomes weakness.

A devoted pelican, perceiving that her offspring required food, lanced her own bosom with her sharp bill, and refreshed them with her blood.

“I admire your tenderness,” cried the eagle, “but I lament your want of penetration ; for, after all, you have hatched several worthless cuckoos.”

So it was, the cunning cuckoo had mingled her eggs with those of the pelican. Were these creatures worthy of so precious a sacrifice?

FABLE XLIV.

THE LION AND THE TIGER.

THE lion and the hare both sleep with open eyes ; and the former, fatigued by the chase, was reposing in this manner at the mouth of his terrific den. A tiger, who happened to pass by at the time, was diverted at this watchful slumber.

"The fearless lion," he exclaimed, "sleeps with his eyes open like the timid hare!"

"Like the hare!" roared the roused-up lion, and instantly sprang on the neck of the offender. The tiger lay weltering in his blood, and the conqueror resumed his repose.

FABLE XLV.

THE BULL AND THE STAG.

A COURAGEOUS bull and a swift-footed stag once grazed together on the same pasture. "Stag!" said the bull, "should the lion attack us, let us make a common cause, and repulse him bravely." "Do not expect so much from me," answered the stag; "why should I enter into an unequal contest with the lion, when I can escape by my speed?"

FABLE XLVI.

THE KNIGHT IN CHESS.

Two boys who wished to play at chess, being deficient in a knight, constituted one out of a superfluous pawn, by placing a mark upon it.

"How?" cried the other knights. "Keep your place, sir, one step at a time."

The boys, who overheard their insolence, exclaimed, "Silence, it performs exactly the same service as yourselves."

FABLE XLVII.

THE BRAZEN STATUE.

THE brazen statue of an eminent artist was melted by the fierceness of an accidental fire into a shapeless mass. This happening to come into the hands of another artist, he formed of it another statue, different in form to the first, but of equal beauty.

Envy beheld it and gnashed its teeth; but at last recollected a miserable consolation. "The good man would not have been able to produce this very middling figure, had he not availed himself of the substance of the former one."

FABLE XLVIII.

HERCULES.

WHEN Hercules was received among the gods, he paid his respects in the first place to Juno.

All Olympus was astonished, and it was remarked to him, that it was his enemy to whom he paid this particular attention.

“Even so,” answered Hercules, “her persecutions alone produced the achievements by which I have merited a place among you.”

The celestial assembly approved of the answer of the new god, and Juno was reconciled.

FABLE XLIX.

THE BULL AND THE CALF.

A STRONG bull, in forcing itself through the stable door, split the post with his horns. “Look, shepherd!” cried a calf, “such mischief is never done by me.” “It would be very pleasant to me, were it in your power,” returned the shepherd.

The language of this calf resembles that of certain inconsiderable philosophers. “The wicked Bayle!” they exclaim, “how many pious souls has he disturbed with his doubts!” Alas, gentlemen, how willingly might you torment us, were all of you Bayles.

FABLE L.

THE PEACOCK AND THE CROW.

A FOOLISH crow adorned itself with the cast plumage of the peacock, and when it conceived itself sufficiently ornamented, mingled with the brilliant birds of Juno; being quickly recognised, the peacocks, with their sharp bills, soon stripped her of her deceptive apparel.

“Cease,” the crow at last exclaimed, “you have now got back all that belongs to you.” But the peacocks, perceiving a few brilliant feathers in the crow’s own plumage, answered, “Be silent, impostor, even these cannot belong to you.”

FABLE LI.

THE BLIND HEN.

A HEN became blind, but being used to scrape the ground, continued to do so when she could no longer see. And what was the utility of this practice to the industrious fool? Another hen, with a quick sight, spared her own tender feet, and picked up the grains as fast as the first turned them up.

The laborious *German* collects the materials which the witty *Frenchman* knows how to use.

FABLE LII.

THE PROTECTED LAMB.

HYLAX, of the race of the wolf-dog, guarded an innocent lamb ; Lychodes, who himself, in hair, muzzle and ears, more resembled a wolf than a dog, attending to the circumstance—"Wolf," said he, addressing Hylax, "what are you doing with this lamb?"

"You are a wolf yourself," returned the latter, for the dogs were deceived in each other; "depart, or you shall find that I know how to take care of it."

Lychodes persisted, and endeavoured to withdraw the lamb by force. Hylax was equally determined to keep it, and between these excellent protectors, the poor lamb was torn in pieces.

FABLE LIII.

JUPITER AND APOLLO.

JUPITER and Apollo disputed as to which of them was the best archer. "Let us try," said Apollo, and straining his bow he shot so precisely in the centre of the mark, that Jupiter saw no possible means of surpassing him. "I perceive," observed the latter, "that you are an excellent archer; I shall find it difficult to excel you and will try another time." The prudent Jupiter has yet to make the attempt.

FABLE LIV.

THE WATER-SNAKE.

WEARIED by their importunity, Jupiter at last gave the frogs a rapacious water-snake, instead of a peaceable log, for a king.

"Being our king," cried the frogs, "why do you devour us?"

"Because," answered the reptile, "you asked for me." "But *I* never asked for you," exclaimed one of the frogs, which the monarch had already devoured with his eyes. "Not asked for me?"

said the despot ; “ so much the worse ; I must swallow *you*, for *not* asking for me.”

FABLE LV,

THE FOX AND THE MASK.

A LONG time ago the fox lighted upon a mask belonging to a player, with a wide, open, and grinning mouth, “ What a head !” exclaimed the contemplative fox. “ No brains, and an open mouth ! was not this the head of a prattler ?”

Chastisers of the most innocent of the senses ! ye eternal talkers ! this fox understood you.

FABLE LVI.

THE RAVEN AND THE FOX.

A RAVEN bore away in his talons a poisoned piece of meat, which an angry gardener had provided for certain annoying rats. Perched on an old oak tree, he was just ready to devour it, when a fox appeared beneath, and exclaimed, “ Heaven bless you, bird of Jupiter !” “ For whom do you take me ?” asked the raven. “ For whom do I take you ?” rejoined the Fox. “ Are you not the stately

eagle which daily descends from the right hand of Jupiter to this oak tree, to feed me, the poor fox ? Why would you conceal yourself ? Do I not behold in your victorious claw the prayed-for gift which Jupiter continues to send me through you ?”

The raven was surprised, and felt an inward pleasure at being mistaken for the eagle. “I must not undeceive the fox,” said he to himself, and stupidly dropping his prey, he proudly flew away. The fox received the prize with a grin, and devoured it with malignant joy. That joy, however, was soon turned into sorrow ; the poison operated, and he died.

Abominable flatterers ! would that you were all thus rewarded with one poison for another !

FABLE LVII.

THE RAVEN.

THE fox observing that the raven plundered the altars of the gods, and that he supported himself from their sacrifices, said to himself, “I should like to know whether the raven partakes of the sacrifices because he is a prophetic bird ; or whether he is deemed a prophetic bird because he is so insolent as to partake of the sacrifices ?”

FABLE LVIII.

THE GRAPES.

I KNOW a poet who has suffered more from the noisy admiration of his imitators, than from all the envious and affected contempt of his critics.

“They are but sour,” exclaimed the fox, speaking of a bunch of grapes, to procure which he leaped in vain. A sparrow overheard him, and repeated, “Sour! why should these grapes be sour? they by no means look so:” on which he flew towards the vine, tasted, and found them uncommonly sweet. This being the case, the sparrow quickly assembled a hundred of his greedy brethren, who all tasted, and, in a few minutes the bunch of grapes was so spoiled, the fox cared no longer to jump after it.

FABLE LIX.

THE FOX.

A HUNTED fox took refuge upon a wall, and descending on the other side, rested his foot upon a thorn. He came down safely; but was painfully wounded by the thorn. “Wretched friends

those," cried the fox ! " who cannot assist, without, at the same time, injuring us !"

FABLE LX.

THE GOATS.

THE goats requested Jupiter to give them horns, for originally they had none.

"Reflect well upon your petition," answered Jupiter ; "with the gift of horns, another is necessarily connected, which may be less agreeable to you."

The goats however persisted in their request, and Jupiter exclaimed, "Then be it so, possess horns."

The goats instantly found themselves possessed of horns and a beard, which was equally new to them. How much more were they pained by the beard, than pleased with the horns !

FABLE LXI.

THE WILD APPLE TREE.

A SWARM of bees took possession of the hollow trunk of an old apple tree, and filled it with their

honied stores ; on which the tree became so proud it despised comparison with all other trees.

“ Wretched source of pride !” exclaimed a rose tree, which witnessed these airs ; “ is your own fruit less sour in consequence of this borrowed sweetness ? Force up your honey into that, if you are able ; and then, and then only, will man bless you.”

FABLE LXII.

THE STAG AND THE FOX.

“ Now we poor and weak animals are undone,” said the stag to the fox ; “ the lion has conspired with the wolf.”

“ With the wolf ?” returned the fox ; “ this is still bearable ; the lion roars, the wolf howls ; we still, therefore, have time to save ourselves by our speed. But we shall all be undone should the lion ever think of conspiring with the silent and insidious lynx.”

FABLE LXIII.

THE THORN.

“ TELL me,” said the willow to the thorn, “ why you are so covetous of the clothing of those

who pass by you; of what use can they be to you?"

"None whatever," answered the thorn; "I have no desire to deprive the passengers of their raiment, I only wish to tear it."

FABLE LXIV.

TIRESIAS.

TIRESIAS took up his staff, and travelled across the country. His way led him through a sacred grove, in the midst of which three paths crossed each other. Here he perceived a pair of serpents, amorously folded around each other. Tiresias raised his staff to separate these living serpents; but oh, wonderful! as his staff descended to separate them, Tiresias became a woman!

At the expiration of nine months Tiresias again passed through the grove, and on the very same spot where the three paths crossed each other, she perceived a pair of serpents in mortal combat; Tiresias again raised the staff to separate the enraged serpents, when, still more wonderful! the staff had no sooner descended, than Tiresias became once more a man!

FABLE LXV.

MINERVA.

“LEAVE them alone, my friend, those mean and spiteful enemies of your increasing fame! Why seek to immortalize names which otherwise are doomed to oblivion?”

In the foolish war which the giants waged with the gods, the former opposed to Minerva a hideous dragon, which the goddess seized, and with her potent arm hurled against the firmament. There it shines still; and thus what had been considered the reward of lofty deeds, became the punishment of an evil one.

FABLE LXVI.

THE ORNAMENTED BOW.

A MAN possessed an excellent bow, made of ebony, with which he could shoot at a great distance, and with much precision. This bow he highly prized, but on viewing it attentively, he thought it somewhat too simple, its ornament consisted exclusively in its polish. “What a pity! I will repair to an artist, and order him to

carve some figures on my bow," said the man. He did so, and the artist represented thereon a complete chase ;—and what could be more suitable ? The man, overjoyed, exclaimed, " You well deserve these embellishments, my excellent bow !" at the same moment placing the arrow. Twang sounded the string, and the bow—broke !

FABLE LXVII.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE LARK.

WHAT should we say to the poets who take flights beyond the comprehension of their readers ?

Nothing, but what the nightingale said one day to the lark. " Do you soar so very high, my friend, in order that you may not be heard ? "

FABLE LXVIII.

THE SPIRIT OF SOLOMON.

AN aged man, in order to plough his field and to strew the fruitful seed in the willing bosom of the earth, bore up against the toil of his employment and the heat of the weather. On a sudden, a divine spectre stood before him under the broad shadow of a lime-tree. The old man started :

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"I am Solomon," said the phantom emphatically. "What are you doing here, old man?"

"If you are Solomon," replied the old man, "why need you ask? You sent me in my youth to the ant. I attended to its ways, and became industrious, and what I then learned, I am still practising."

"You have learned but half your lesson," returned the shadow. "Repair once more to the ant, and let it teach you to repose in the winter of your years, and enjoy what you have already gathered."

FABLE LXIX.

THE SHEEP AND THE SWALLOW.

A SWALLOW once pounced upon the back of a sheep, in order to tear away some wool for its nest. The sheep skipped with anger. "Why are you so niggardly to me alone?" said the swallow. "You allow the shepherd to take away the whole of your wool; and to me you refuse a single lock. What is the reason of this difference?"

"This only," answered the sheep: "the shepherd takes with gentleness that which you rudely seize."

FABLE LXX.

THE RAVEN.

THE raven having observed that the eagle sat on her eggs for thirty days, exclaimed, "It is owing to this that young eagles are so quick and strong-sighted; I will do the same." Since that time the raven is as long in hatching her eggs as the eagle, but hitherto has produced nothing but sorry ravens as before.

FABLE LXXI.

THE OSTRICH.

THE swift rein-deer observing the speed of the ostrich, said, "The running of the ostrich is not so extraordinary; but I doubt not that he flies so much the better."

The eagle who attended to the flight of the same bird, on another occasion, exclaimed, "I perceive that the ostrich cannot fly; but I dare say that he runs very well."

FABLE LXXII.

THE MOUSE.

A PHILOSOPHICAL mouse praised bountiful nature for having made the preservation of mice her

peculiar care. "Half of us," said he, "she furnishes with wings, so that were all below destroyed by cats, our species would be continued by the bat."

The honest mouse was not aware that there are also winged cats. Our pride is often founded upon our ignorance.

FABLE LXXIII.

THE SWALLOW.

BELIEVE me, my friend, the great world is not suitable to either the learned or the poetical. Their real merit is seldom appreciated in these exalted quarters; yet, alas! they are often weak enough to exchange it for a secondary merit of very inferior value.

In former times, the swallow was as full of voice and as melodious as the nightingale; but tired of living in the solitary grove, to be heard and heeded only by uncultivated peasants and harmless shepherds, she resolved to quit her humble admirers and reside in town. What was the consequence? the inhabitants of the town being too much occupied to listen to her tuneful song, the swallow by degrees forgot her singing, and in lieu thereof learned to build.

FABLE LXXIV.

THE EAGLE.

THE eagle was one day asked, why she brought up her young so high in the air? "Would they venture so near the sun when grown up," returned the eagle, "were I to rear them near the earth?"

FABLE LXXV.

THE OLD AND THE YOUNG STAG.

A STAG whom nature had allowed to live for centuries, said to one of his descendants, "I can well recollect the time when man had not invented the murderous gun."

"What a fortunate time must it have been for our species!" sighed the grandchild.

"You conclude too hastily," rejoined the old stag; "those times were different, but not better. Men had bows and arrows instead of guns, that is all."

FABLE LXXVI.

THE PEACOCK AND THE COCK.

"How boldly and proudly is your husband strutting about the yard!" said the peacock to the

hen, "yet men do not say the proud cock, but the proud peacock."

"The reason is," replied the hen, "that man allows for a well-grounded pride: the cock is proud of his courage and vigilance; you only of your feathers and gay colouring."

FABLE LXXVII.

THE STAG.

NATURE had formed a stag of more than common size, with long hair hanging tristfully down from his neck.

"This will enable me," said the stag, "to assume the appearance of melancholy and dejection;" and in consequence the affected animal hung down his head as if labouring under extreme depression.

How many a literary coxcomb imagines that he would scarcely be considered a genius, if he did not frequently complain of head-ach and the spleen.

FABLE LXXVIII.

THE EAGLE AND THE FOX.

"Be not so proud of your lofty flight," said the fox to the eagle, "you only ascend

into the air to look more extensively after a carcass."

In the same manner I know men who became great philosophers, not out of love to science, but in pursuit of a fellowship.

FABLE LXXIX.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

You are angry, favourite of the Muses, at the noisy rabble of Parnassus. Learn from me, what was once said to the nightingale, "O sing, once again, dear nightingale!" exclaimed a shepherd to the silent songster, one pleasant summer's evening.

"Alas!" replied the nightingale, "the frogs are so loud, I lose every inclination to sing. Do you not hear them?"

"I certainly hear them," returned the shepherd, "but only in consequence of your silence."

FABLE LXXX.

THE SPARROW AND THE BAT.

A SPARROW once said to the bat, "Look yonder at the eagle, you are just able to perceive him;

he is preparing for a lofty flight, and, familiar with the sun and stars, will make directly for the throne of Jupiter. Now, although I do not look like an eagle, I will undertake to fly like one."

"Fly then, braggart!" exclaimed the bat.

The eagle soared aloft on his well-trying pinions, and the sparrow followed; but scarcely had they cleared the lofty trees, when both were equally out of the sight of the bat, and therefore in her opinion they reached the same extraordinary height.

A certain Mr. F. assumes to be as great a poet as Milton. Allow him to choose his umpire, and he may establish his pretension.

FABLE LXXXI.

THE EAGLE AND THE OWL.

THE eagle of Jupiter and the owl of Pallas once disputed for priority. "You contend with me, despicable phantom of night!" exclaimed the eagle. "Be more gentle in your expressions," returned the owl. "Heaven equally admits of both of us; why therefore are you better than myself?"

"It is true, we are both in Olympus," returned the eagle; "but I came borne on my own wings; you were brought here by your goddess."

FABLE LXXXII.

THE DANCING BEAR.

A DANCING bear snapped his chain, and regaining the woods, amused his companions with a specimen of his abilities in the ballet. "Look at me," he cried, "behold grace, agility, and attitude; imitate me, if possible."

"Go," replied an old bear; "such skill, however rare and difficult, only proves you to have been a mean-spirited slave."

If to be an accomplished courtier, it is necessary to substitute flattery and servility for integrity and spirit; if to rise at court, truth and sincerity are to be sacrificed to compliments and adulation; is the address of the finished courtier to be admired or despised?

FABLE LXXXIII.

THE STAG AND THE FOX.

"I REALLY do not understand how your courage can so easily fail you," I one day overheard the fox say to the stag; "the smallest greyhound can put you to flight. Behold your size and stature; you cannot be deficient in strength. Your

horns alone would kill the fiercest dog with a single blow. We foxes are excusable, being too weak for resistance; but that the stag has no such excuse, is as clear as sunshine. That it is shameful in the stronger to avoid a combat, is an universal maxim. You, my friend, surpass the dogs in strength exceedingly, and consequently cannot honourably run away."

"You are right," replied the stag, "I have never given the subject due consideration; henceforth, I will be immovable, and resist both huntsmen and hounds."

Unfortunately, at this moment the horn sounded, and a jocund troop of Diana's followers were heard approaching. The hounds sent forth a jovial cry, and in one instant both gigantic stag and diminutive fox were equally out of sight.

Instinct is stronger than demonstration.

FABLE LXXXIV.

THE SUN.

THE star, the source of day!—"Ah! poet," I hear some one exclaim, "when will you learn to talk like other people? Are we to be perplexed with figure and fine language, in the narration of your foolish fables?" Well then; the sun was

one day asked, if he were offended because the world, ever deceived by appearances, estimated his diameter at little beyond a span ?

“It ought to make me angry,” the sun replied ; “but what is the world, and who are they who think so ? Blind and miserable reptiles. It is sufficient that those loftier spirits, who, aided by science, learn how to distinguish between reality and appearances, know me better.”

Ye poets, whose genius and inspiration bear you out of the sight of the vulgar, think like the sun ; be satisfied with your own consciousness, and indifferent to the short-sightedness of your readers.

FABLE LXXXV.

THE CONJUGAL PATTERN.

I WILL relate an instance of conjugal felicity, at which all the world will be astonished. Every one believes that matrimony necessarily produces discord, but every one is mistaken.

I have witnessed an example of matrimony, the quiet of which resembled the stillness of a summer's night. May no one enjoy the same who doubts my word ! Yet the woman was no angel, the husband no saint, and both had faults, for who is blameless ?

If a scoffer be disposed to ask me to explain the wonder, my answer will be brief: The man was deaf; the woman blind.

FABLE LXXXVI.

THE LION AND THE GNAT.

THE heroic leader of a busy swarm of gnats discovered one day, in the course of his knight-errantry, a lion fatigued with the toils of the chase, reposing in a sound slumber. "Look, my brethren," exclaimed the gnat to the crowd of insects around; "the lion is asleep. I will punish him; he shall bleed, the tyrant!"

So saying, the gnat boldly alighted on the lion's tail, and stinging it, flew away, proud of the laurels it had reaped by so daring an exploit. Venturing another look: "The lion does not move," he resumed. "Is he dead? if so, it is I who have freed the woods from the despot! See, my friends, he whom the tiger dreads is fallen by my sting. We must proceed and boldly despatch more of our enemies; a happy beginning is every thing!"

In the midst of this boasting, and while all were busily anticipating future triumphs, the careless and unconscious lion awoke, refreshed from his slumber, and resumed his search after his prey.

FABLE LXXXVI.

THE BEARS.

IN consequence of their gravity, importance, and proud assumption of piety, the bears for a long time claimed to be professors and teachers of morality to all other animals as a matter of right. Every one feared them, and no one ventured to compete with them in their serious and painful duty, until at length a portion of philanthropy arose in the bosom of a fox, in consequence of which the foxes began now and then to ponder on morality as well as the bears. Now, both the bears and the foxes pursued the same object, but by very different roads.

The bears sought to establish their doctrines by rigour and austerity. The foxes were also severe, but it was in the way of ridicule. The bears growled denunciations; the foxes contributed satire. By the first, appearances were chiefly regarded; by the latter, the heart: there all was dark and gloomy; here all light and life; there hypocrisy was too frequently the fruit; here virtue.

If any one on a further consideration of the subject ask me, whether these parties are on good terms with each other? I can only reply, O that they were! how beneficial for virtue, wit, and morals!

but alas, the poor fox is hated by the bear, notwithstanding his good intentions. Why? It must be confessed, because he will very often lavish his wit and satire on the bears themselves.

I can no longer wait for the moral, my friend; I must go to the play: will you cease to sermonize and go along with me? What is performed? *Le Tartuffe*. O certainly.

FABLE LXXXVIII.

WELCOME HOME.

FAUSTIN remained absent from his home, wife, and children, for fifteen years, during which time he had grown rich by commerce and usury; but at length the sordid merchant embarked to return home again. "Good heaven!" sighed honest Faustin, when he came within sight of the abode of his family, "deal not with me according to my demerits, and spare thy chastisement! Let me once more see my wife, and my son and daughter, well and happy." Thus Faustin prayed, and his prayer was granted. He arrived, and found peace and plenty in his house, his wife and children in good health, and, to crown the blessing, his two children had become four!

FABLE LXXXIX.

THE SPECTACLES.

LOVE once played an old nobleman a sorry trick : weary of being denominated bachelor, at the age of sixty he began to court a beautiful young girl, called Finetta, the daughter of an honest citizen. " Let the world blame me as much as it pleases," exclaimed the old dotard, " Finetta shall be my wife." He instantly repaired to his charmer, and made his proposals, like a man whom it would be impossible to refuse, talked significantly of dower, and, finally, put on his spectacles to read his rent-roll.

" Well, child, what is your answer ?" asked his lordship, with great self-satisfaction, and leisurely taking off his spectacles.

" Alas, my lord, all this would be admirable, if—"

" If !" exclaimed the noble lord.

" Yes, my lord, if I had not taken an oath."—

" An oath, Finetta ! What, an oath not to marry ?"

" Heaven forbid !" returned Finetta ; " I have only taken an oath not to marry a man like your lordship, who carries his eyes in his pocket." *

* The last five fables are denominated by the Author Narrative Fables.

ESSAY ON FABLE.

EVERY fiction with which a poet combines a certain plan and purpose, is called his fable. Thus the fiction which he introduces into his epic poem or his drama, is his fable or plot. It is not meant to allude to this species of fable in the present essay ; my object is the Esopic fable alone ; which fable is also a fiction composed for a certain object or purpose.

I may be allowed, at the beginning of my treatise, to anticipate a portion of the middle of it, in order to allude to a principle on which a particular division of the Esopic fable is founded. This division, which I shall often have occasion to allude to hereafter, appears to me by no means so well known as to warrant in me a presumption that all my readers are acquainted with it.

Esop composed most of his fables in advertence to actual occurrences : his followers have for the most part either invented the occurrences, or have merely sought to establish some general truth without reference to passing events. The latter, therefore, usually satisfy themselves with the explanation of a general truth by the invented fable ; while the former, in addition to this truth, had to show the application of the fable to the real case before them, in order to establish an universal maxim from both the one and the other : this gave rise to the division of the fable into simple and compound.

A fable is simple, when a general moral is alone deducible. "The lioness was reproached for giving birth to one whelp at a time ; 'Yes,' replied the lioness, 'but that one is a lion !'" (*Fab. Æsop.* 216, Ed. Hauptzmanianæ.) The truth of this fable, *ὅτι το καλον εκευ πληθει αλλ' αρετη*, is at once apparent, and the fable is a simple one were I in want of this general proposition. A fable is *compound*, when the truth it is intended to establish is applied to a case which has either really occurred, or is supposed to have taken place. "I write," said a poetaster to a poet, "seven tragedies in one year ; but you only one tragedy in seven years !" "True," replies the poet, "but that one is an Athaliah." If we apply the former fable to this

fact, it will become compound ; by including two individuals' cases, illustrative of the same general truth.

It is, however, scarcely necessary to observe, that the distinction is not grounded on any essential difference between the fables, but merely on the different manner in which they were composed ; and thus it may be seen, that one and the same fable may be either simple or compound. In Phædrus, we find the fable of *The Mountain in Labour* to be a simple one.

Hoc scriptum est tibi
Qui magna cum minaris, extricas nihil.

Any one who makes disproportionate preparations for a trifling result ; who takes a long run for a small leap ; every fool, every boaster, who follows up great promises with small performances ; finds himself portrayed in this fable. Our Hagedorn, however, makes this fable a compound one, by identifying a bombastic poet with the labouring mountain.

“Gods ! save yourselves ! Men, betake ye to flight ! a mountain is in labour, and in her extremity scatters sand and stones.—Sufferus perspires at every pore, and foams with tempestuous energy. Nothing can withstand his inspiration ; he stamps on the ground, strikes his forehead and gnashes his

teeth ! Why ? he is composing rhymes, and intends to excel Homer. Attend to the result in both instances ; here is a sonnet, there a mouse."

This distinction, therefore, in relation to which the elementary treatises are silent, notwithstanding its utility in the way of correct application,—this distinction premised, I will proceed in my course. It is not an untrodden path ; I perceive many footsteps before me, which I must partly examine to ensure a correspondent progress. For this purpose I will briefly attend to the most celebrated expositions of fable on the part of my various predecessors.

De la Motte, who was not so much a man of poetical genius as of enlightened mind,—one who could venture on many things, and hope to succeed tolerably in all,—defines Fable to be Instruction under the disguise of Allegory, or allegorical action. " La fable est une instruction déguisée sous l'allégorie d'une action." *Discours sur la Fable.*

The son of Tarquinius Superbus, having taken up his abode among the Gabii, secretly sent to his father to know how he must act among them. The king, who was about to take the field when the messenger arrived, raised his baton, and struck off the heads of the tallest of the poppies. " Go," said he to the messenger, " and tell my son what you have seen me do." The son understood

the significant action of the father and ordered the chief men of the Gabii to be executed. *Florus*, lib. i. cap. 7. Here is an allegorical action, and instruction concealed beneath it; but is this a fable? Can it be said that Tarquin conveyed his commands to his son by a fable? Certainly not.

The father who convinced his sons of the advantages of union by a bundle of sticks, which can only be broken separately—(*Fabul. Æsop.* 171.)—Can this be called a fable?

But if the same father had related to his quarrelling sons how successfully three bulls kept a lion at a distance while they agreed among themselves, and how quickly they became his prey when discord arose between them, and they divided; (*Fab. Æsop.* 297.) then would the father have instructed his sons by a fable. The distinction is obvious.

It is therefore evident that fable consists, not in a mere allegorical action, but in the narration of such an action. This is the first objection I make to La Motte; but why does he use the word allegory at all? A learned expression, which is combined with a precise notion in the minds of very few persons, should be excluded from a good definition. How much more so, if it can be shown that it is here altogether improperly applied, and that the action of the fable is not an

allegory, nor can be such, except under peculiar circumstances.

Quintilian teaches, *Ἀλληγορία*, quam inversionem interpretamur, aliud verbis, aliud sensu, extendit ac etiam interim contrarium (*Quintil. lib. viii. cap. 6.*)

The allegory says not that which it literally seems to say, but something else. The modern professors of rhetoric assert, that this something else is to be restricted to something similar to it, or otherwise any irony would be an allegory. *Allegoria dicitur quia ἄλλο μὲν ἀγορευεῖ, ἄλλο λεγένοει.* Et istud ἄλλο restringi debet ad aliud simile: aliud etiam omnis. Ironia allegoria esset. (*Voss. Instit. Orat. lib. iii.*) The last words of Quintilian, "ac etiam interim contrarium," are obviously in opposition to this doctrine: it may however pass. The allegory therefore does not imply what it seems to say, but something similar. In the same manner therefore the fable, in order to be allegorical, must not express what it means to convey, but something like it.

Let us examine further: "The weaker usually becomes the prey of the stronger." This is a general truth, at the mention of which I imagine a series of beings, one of which is stronger than the other, and which may destroy each other according to their respective degrees of strength. A series of

beings !—who would long remain satisfied with a sterile conception of beings in general, without selecting objects, the attributes of which would furnish some sensible images ? I resolve to select a series of such objects. I might ransack history for kings and kingdoms, but how few are so versed in history, as to be aware of their relative strength the moment they are mentioned. I should in that case be understood by few, wherever my purpose is to be understood by every one. I turn my thought towards animals, and find every relative degree of strength even among those which are well known ; as the woodcock, the martin, the fox, and the wolf. Every one can also tell the comparative strength and weakness of those animals the moment they are mentioned. If I were now to say the martin devours the woodcock, the fox the martin, and the wolf the fox—Devours ? it might be said ; perhaps not : in the present tense the fact is doubtful. I therefore say, did devour, or had devoured ; and now my assertion becomes a fable. The martin devoured the woodcock, the fox strangled the martin, and the wolf tore into pieces the fox ;—this is a fable ; but how can I say that it contains an allegory ? The woodcock is the weakest, the martin less so, the fox stronger still, and the wolf the strongest of all ; but what have all these similar to the comparative degrees

of strength in the abstract? Is the fox similar to those possessed of a certain portion of strength, and the wolf to the strongest of all; or does the fox actually *represent* the strong of a certain class, and the wolf the strongest of all? The latter certainly. It would be a childish abuse of words to say that the particular is *similar* to the general, the individual to the species, and the species to the genus. Is a particular greyhound merely similar to greyhounds in general, or greyhounds in general only similar to a dog of any sort? The question is ridiculous. If then there is no similarity between the particular individuals of the fable, and the general objects of its moral application, there can be no allegory in the former.

But perhaps it may be said, that the similarity consists in the manner of conveying the instruction, either through the sensible images in the fable, or by allegorical narrative; that in either way the mind perceives the same truth. But neither will this suffice; for if the mode of conception be alone considered, were the fable only deemed an allegory because of the intuitive truth which is conveyed through the medium of the catastrophe, we should find allegory in every fable; which nobody can intend to assert, who is acquainted with the meaning of words.

But I fear I dwell too long on a point which is

clear, I will therefore close by saying that a simple fable cannot possibly be allegorical.

I must, however, recall to the recollection of the reader the position with which I set out, that every simple fable may be made a compound one. Is it in this case that the fable may become an allegory? It is; for in the compound fable, two particular instances are made to support each other. Between two or more individuals, which belong to the same genus, there is certainly some similarity, and therefore an allegory may be the result; but we must not say that the allegory exists between the fable and its moral; it is between the fable and the real case which gave rise to it, as far as the same truth is apparent in both, that the allegory can be said to exist. The well-known fable of the horse which allowed itself to be bridled by the man, and mounted by the latter, in order to revenge himself on the deer,—that fable is so far not allegorical, if we only draw from it the moral of *Phædrus*, *Impune potius lædi quam dedi alteri*; but on the occasion that *Sterpsichorus* related it, and on that occasion alone, it was an allegory. The former related it at a time when the *Himerenses* had made *Phalaris* the commander of their forces, and were about to furnish him with a body guard. “O, ye *Himerenses*!” he exclaimed, “who are so determined to

revenge yourself on your enemies, be on your guard, or it will happen to you as to the horse. You have already allowed a bridle to be put round your necks, by having placed Phalaris at the head of your troops with unlimited power. If you further allow him a body guard, your liberties will terminate.”—(*Arist. Rhet.* lib. ii. cap. 20.)—All is here allegorical, but only because the horse, here alluded to, is not made applicable to every offended seeker of revenge, but to the offended Himerenses only; the deer not to every offensive enemy, but to the enemies of the Himerenses alone; the man not to every sly oppressor, but to Phalaris exclusively; the bridle not to every first encroachment upon liberty, but simply to the unrestricted commandership of Phalaris; and, lastly, the allusion to mounting on the back of the horse, not to every final blow to liberty, but merely to the body guard to be granted to Phalaris. It follows from all this, that the fable only becomes an allegory when to the invented individual case which it contains a similar and real one is added; and the word allegory must be regarded as not at all connected with the strict definition of fable, which in its essence ought to convey a general moral precept. This is the second observation which I have to make on the remark of M. De la Motte.

But let it not be imagined that I object to the

word allegory, as a definition of fable, only because it is superfluous ; it is vicious in itself, and has probably given rise to the production of many a defective fable. If any one satisfies himself, when he makes a fable allegorical, he will certainly make a bad one. But is a bad fable a fable at all? A single instance will be sufficient to place the whole in a proper light. I will choose an ancient fable, because I will not excite enmity should I happen to prove in the right. I allude to the fable of the Man and the Satyr—(*Fab. Æsop.* 126.) The man blows his cold hand in order to warm it, and blows into his hot gruel in order to cool it. “What !” exclaimed the satyr, “blow hot and cold from the same mouth : I will have nothing to do with you.” This fable is to teach, *ὅτι δεῖ φεργεῖν ἡμᾶς τὰς φιλίας, ὡν ἀμφιβόλος ἐστὶν ἡ διαδοεσις*, to fly from the friendship of all the false and double-minded. Does this fable duly inculcate such a moral? I am not the first to deny it. Richer (*Fables Nouvelles*, preface, page 10) says, “that it sins against the propriety of allegory ; that its moral is simply an allusion, and grounded in a mere equivoque.” Richer is in the right, but he has expressed himself incorrectly. The fault of that fable lies not in the inaccuracy of the allegory, but that it is an allegory only. The action of this man, which is so

disagreeable to the satyr, instead of being included in the general truth of the moral, is only similar to it. The man ought really to have acted contradictorily ; but in this fable he is only supposed to have done so. The precept warns us against men who say yes and no to the same thing ; who praise and blame one and the same object ; but this fable only shows us a man who uses his breath for different purposes on different occasions.

Lastly ; what cannot be allegorized ? The most absurd story may in that sense contain a moral. The fellow-servants of Esop longed for the figs of their master, and having satisfied themselves, when the theft was discovered, laid the blame on Esop. In order to clear himself, Esop drank a great quantity of warm water, and his fellow-servants were obliged to do the same ; the warm water had its usual effect, and the servants were detected. What does this story teach us ? Nothing, but that warm water taken into the stomach in large quantities will operate as an emetic ; and yet a Persian poet makes a noble use of this tale : “ When you shall be made to drink in the other world,” says he, “ of boiling water, then will every thing come to light which you have taken so much pains to conceal from the eyes of the world ; and the hypocrite, who by cant and jargon has passed here

for an honest man, will appear overwhelmed with shame and confusion." (Vide *Herbelot, Bibl. Orient.* p. 516.) Admirable!

I have only one more objection to make to this definition of fable by De la Motte. "The word instruction, used by him, is too loose and general. Is then any mythological passage which leads to a physical truth, or from which an acute Bacon can distil a transcendental doctrine, a fable?"

When the singular Mr. Holberg relates that "The mother of the devil once gave to the latter five goats to take care of, during her absence; which goats gave him so much trouble, he could not keep them in order, notwithstanding his proverbial dexterity; and that on his mother's return he said to her, 'Dear mother, here are your goats. I would rather stand sentinel over a whole troop of cavalry than over a single goat.'" Has the poor man narrated a fable? There is certainly something learned by it, for he adds as follows, "This fable shows that no creature is so difficult to be kept in order as a goat." A very important general truth! Nobody has maltreated fable more vilely than this Holberg; but every one abuses it who thinks of conveying by fable any thing more than moral instruction.

Richer is another French fabulist, who narrates in a somewhat superior manner to La Motte, but

who is far below him in invention. He also was desirous to communicate his thoughts in this branch of poetry, and defines the fable to be "a small poem, which contains some maxims concealed under allegorical imagery." Richer has evidently had the explanation of fable by De la Motte in his eye, and possibly intended to improve it, but has certainly not succeeded. A small poem? If Richer deems the essence of a poem to be fiction, then I am satisfied; but if he thinks that poetical language and a certain quantity of metrical syllables the principal requisites of a poem, in that case I cannot agree with him. I shall however explain myself more fully in the sequel.

"A rule," (*précepte*.) This word is as indefinite as that of De la Motte. All arts and sciences have their rules and precepts, but the fable belongs exclusively to morality. Again, had he considered it in another point of view, the word "rule" is still worse than the word "instruction," because under rule, we understand that which relates directly to our actions; whereas all the instruction conveyed by fable is not of that nature. A great many of them inform us not of what ought to be done, but of what is done. Is the usual sentence,

In principatu commutando civium

Nil præter domini nomen mutant pauperes,—

a rule or an instruction ? and yet it is a conclusion from one of the finest fables of Phædrus (Lib. i. Fab. 15.) It is no doubt true, that out of all these passages some practical rules can be deduced ; but every thing extractable from these pregnant sentences is not on that account to be included in the fable. Moreover, what a fable must that be, in which such a sentence as that last cited, with all its inferences, can be so contained as to be at once apparent.

“ Under an allegorical image.” I have already stated my opinion on the word allegory ;—but the word image—is it possible that Richer deliberately chose it, or only for the sake of differing from De la Motte ? By an image we mean the representation of any thing under one of its attributes at a certain moment. An image may therefore reflect a moral truth, but it is not therefore a fable. Tantalus, who is represented as thirsty in the midst of water, is an image, which proves the possibility of starving amidst plenty ; but it is not on that account a fable. Thus also the following little poem :

Cursu veloci pendens in novacula,
Calvus comosa fronte nudo corpore
Quem si occuparis teneas elapsum semel
Non ipse possit Jupiter reprehendere ;
Occasionem rerum significat brevem.
Effectus impediret ne segnis mora
Finxero antiqui talem effigiem temporis.

Who can consider the last verses as a fable ? although Phædrus has mixed them up among his own. Every simile, every emblem, would be a fable, were it not necessary for the latter to contain a variety of particulars, all harmonizing to one result. In a word, if the fable did not require a catastrophe ; by which, I mean a succession of changes, all of which together form a whole. This final unity rises out of the harmony of all the parts, the ultimate object of the fable—that purpose for the sake of which it was invented—its moral inculcation.

Thus the fable contains a catastrophe when its narrative consists of a succession of changes, each of which contributes to render the motives apparent which are contained in the moral application.

The fable requires a due succession of changes ; a mere coexistent variety will not suffice ; and I am disposed to adopt as an infallible criterion, that every fable is to be deemed a bad one, the catastrophe of which is to be represented by the painter on canvass, as in that case the fable becomes an emblem. “A fisherman threw his net and caught all the larger fish in the river, but the small escaped through the meshes of the net into the water again.” This narrative is among the fables of Esop, (*Fab. Æsop.* 126.) but it is no fable ; at least it is a poor one. It contains no catastrophe,

and a single fact only, which may be represented by the painter, and its moral is contained in the fact alone.

It is not however sufficient, that the fable exhibits a succession of changes; these changes must all lead to a single conclusion. If they lead to more than one, the catastrophe wants unity, or that alone which makes it a catastrophe, and correctly speaking, it can only be called an event. An instance of this kind we observe in the following lines :

Lucernam fur accendit ex ara Jovis
 Ipsumque compilavit ad lumen suum ;
 Onustus qui sacrilegio cum discederet
 Repente vocem sancta misit religio ;
 Malorum quamvis ista fuerint munera
 Mihique invisâ, ut non offender subripi
 Tamen, scelestè spiritu culpam lues
 Olim cum adscriptus venerit pœna dies
 Sed ne ignis noster facinori præluceat,
 Per quem verendos excolit pietas Deos,
 Veto esse tale luminis commercium.
 Ita hodie nec lucernam de flama Deum
 Nec de lucerna fas est accendi sacrum.

What do we read here ? A story *not* a fable. A story occurs ; a fable must be invented, and the object of the invention must always be apparent ; whereas no one is called upon to say why an occurrence has taken place. What therefore led to the invention of the foregoing fable, if fable it is to be

called? Strictly speaking, the poet could only intend to relate a probable occurrence, which produced the interdict “not to light the sacred fire with a common candle; nor a common candle with the sacred fire.” But was this a proper moral for the fabulist? At the utmost, it can only be said that this interdiction is a symbol of a more general one of the same kind; that sacred and profane, good and evil, ought to possess nothing in common. But what share have the other parts of the narrative in this conclusion? None at all; each of them is rather the representation, the individual instance, of some particular proposition. The poet himself felt this difficulty, and knew no other way of getting out of his embarrassment, than that of extracting as many morals himself as he could; for he thus concludes:

Quot res contineat hoc argumentum utiles
 Non explicabit alius, quam qui reperit
 Significat primo sæpe quos ipse alueris
 Tibi inveniri maxime contrarios
 Secundo ostendit scelera non ira Deum,
 Fatorum dicto sed puniri tempora
 Novissime interdicat, ne cum malefico
 Usus bonus consociet ullius rei.

Phædrus, lib iv. Fab. 11.

That must be a miserable fable, of which the author alone can discover the application, and the number of useful truths contained in it, one being

quite sufficient. Such a story given as a fable, is scarcely to be credited, from one of the ancients, those great masters, above all things, of simplicity of design.

I should have learned but little from this excellent judge of the fine arts, Breitinger, if I agreed with him in all things. He gives a double definition of fable, one of which he has borrowed from De la Motte, the other is his own. According to the former, he considers fable to be a well-constructed allegory, of which definition I have already treated ; as also of that of Mr. Richer, who says, that the moral ought to be *concealed* beneath the allegory. Concealed ! What an improper expression. Morals and various truths are doubtless concealed in the golden rules of Pythagoras, but not in fable. It is essential to a good fable, that the moral be at once striking, clear, and forcible ; all which implies the very reverse of concealment.

His predecessor, De la Motte, expresses himself more correctly, by the adoption of the word *disguised* ; but even disguised is inaccurate, as it infers a difficulty of recognition, whereas, in respect to the moral of the fable, there should be none at all. At most, the word *disguised* is applicable to the compound fable alone ; in reference to the simple one, it is clearly inadmissible. Of two similar cases, one may be expressed by the

other, or one be disguised in the other ; but how the general can be disguised in the particular, I cannot comprehend. If any kindred expression be allowable, it ought to be "wrapped up," or "clothed," but certainly not disguised.

From a German critic on the fine arts, I should have expected any thing in the way of explanation, rather than figurative terms. Mr. Breitingер should have left this mode of escaping difficulty to quick-witted Frenchmen ; from him it was more reasonable to expect something of the precision of the schools. It was not for one of his critical reputation to say, that the moral of the fable is either covered or disguised, but on the contrary, that it is intuitively perceptible. He ought to have dwelt on its powerful influence even on the most uncultivated mind, on that very account ; and of its great utility in the province of speculative poetry, as already sufficiently elucidated by our philosopher Wolfe, (vide *Wolffi Philosophiæ Practicæ Universalis*. Pars posterior, §. 302 to 323,) whose work appeared the very year before that of Mr. Breitingер.

With respect to the second definition of fable by this author, I can more conveniently examine it further on.

Mr. Batteux defines fable to be the narrative of an allegorical action ; (vide *Principes de Littéra-*

ture, tom. ii. part. I. p. 5;) it is therefore obvious, that all my preceding observations so far apply equally to him. He, however, further remarks, that an action is a something done intentionally, and to an end; and that it can only be attributed to a rational being. Were this correct, nine-tenths of our fables would be annihilated; and upon this theory, Esop himself would not have written more than three.

“Two cocks enter into single combat; the conquered retires to hide his shame, while the conqueror ascends to the top of the house, where he claps his wings, and proudly crows in token of victory. His exultation attracts the attention of a passing eagle, who suddenly pounces upon, and tears him to pieces.” (Vide *Æsop. Fab.* 145.)

I have always thought this fable a very happy one, and yet, according to Mr. Batteux, there is no action; for what is done which implies object or intention?

“The stag viewing himself in the clear water of a fountain, is ashamed of his slender legs, but is highly delighted with his branching antlers. His ears are soon after assailed by the shouts of the hunters, when his slender legs bear him speedily into the woods, where his handsome horns impede his flight, and he is overtaken.” (Vide *Æsop. Fab.* 181.) In this fable there is

neither object nor intention, any more than in the former. The chase is certainly an action, and the stag designs to save himself; but neither of these objects belong strictly to the fable, as both might be left out or altered, without injury to it: and yet this fable is not destitute of action, for the latter is to be found in the erroneous judgment of the stag. The stag commits an error in judgment, and is soon convinced of it; here is, therefore, a succession of events, which lead the mind to a single conclusion, which is my definition of the action of a fable, being applicable to all good fables. If, however, some reasoners exist, who connect a more rigid and material meaning with the word action, and do not admit of one unless bodily movement be asserted, then will they find no action in any tragedy, when the lover does not prostrate himself before his mistress, the princess fall into a swoon, and the heroes cut each other's throats. As to fables, the fox must always leap, the wolf devour, and the frog assail the mouse. It never seems to occur to these disputants, that every conflict of passion, every different succession of thoughts, each of which ejects the preceding, are all to be regarded as action. To refute them more formally would be mere loss of time; but it is to be regretted that they can find a degree of shelter under the argument of Mr.

Batteux ; for, in truth, the whole of the fables which suit the definition of that writer, is adapted to their theory also, absurd as it obviously is.

I would risk a wager, that the attention of Mr. Batteux was directed to the first fable of Phædrus only, which he calls, more than once, one of the most free and celebrated of all antiquity. In this fable, no doubt, the action is characterised by intention and design. The wolf resolves to devour the sheep, “*fauce improba incitatus*,” but he wishes to do it with some appearance of justice, “*jurgii causam intulit*.” I do not dispute the merit of this fable, which is as perfect as possible ; but it is not perfect because its action implies object or intention, but because it completely conveys its moral, *οἷς προθεσις ἀδικεῖν, παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἡ δικαιολογία ἰσχύει*. (Vide *Æsop. Fab.* 230.) Whoever has a design to oppress the innocent, will endeavour to do so, *μεθ’ ἐνλογῶν αἰτίας* ; will endeavour to find a pretext, but will not give up the design, although the pretext be exposed. Mr. Batteux observed all the beauties of this fable, and, on his own theory, placed it in the most favourable point of view ; but its finest feature he leaves unnoticed, and even misleads his readers in respect to it. “The moral is,” says he, “that the weak are often oppressed by the strong, “*le plus foible est souvent opprimé par le plus fort*.” How insipid and

incorrect ! If the fable taught no more than this, the poet would have invented it for the production of nothing except weariness : in short, as thus described, it would be a bad one, if only for conveying more than it was intended to convey. It is unnecessary to quote any more instances : the more we examine the subject, the more satisfied we shall be, that it depends upon the moral, whether the fable shall contain an action, in the sense of Mr. Batteux, without exception ; or whether an action, in that restricted sense, can be spared. The moral of the last quoted fable of Phædrus certainly requires it ; but it by no means follows that all others do the same.

Are all morals of the same kind ? or do a certain kind alone belong to the province of fable ? Is, for instance, the assertion, "*Laudatis utiliora quæ contemseris sæpe inveniri*," unworthy some simple illustration, which would serve as a demonstration ? yet what of action, implying object or intention, is conveyed by it, which the author must necessarily include in his fable ?

No doubt, if by any assertion, founded on experience, an obligation to do, or not to do, is implied, the poet had better express the obligation, than the assertion, in his fable.

"To be great is not always to be fortunate." To illustrate this simple truth by a good fable

will be scarcely possible. The already quoted fable of the Fisherman, who only succeeds in retaining the large fish in his net, while the smaller ones escape, is, in more than one respect, a poor attempt to illustrate the simple adage. If to be great is not always fortunate, it must be, sometimes, a misfortune ; and woe to him who becomes great, independent of his own exertions, should fortune have exalted him only to make him the more miserable in the sequel, without any fault on his own part. The great fish were precisely in this situation ; it was not left to them to remain small. I am not obliged to the poet for a similitude which renders some miserable to make others happy. The fabulist should teach no one to be dissatisfied with their circumstances ; but here he does that favour for the great. He was not called upon to prove that greatness is in itself a misfortune, but that an anxious desire to attain greatness is often a source of unhappiness ; which was done by the other ancient fabulist, in his fable of the Mice and the Weazels. (*Fab. Æsop.* 143. *Phædrus*, lib. 4. fab. 5.) The mice attributed their defeat by the weazles to the want of a commander-in-chief, and therefore determined to elect one. The exertion of the ambitious mice to obtain the post of honour, induced many of them to distinguish themselves by wearing horns :

Ut conspicium in prælio
Habere signum, quod sequerentur milites.

But it happened that these horns, when they were defeated, prevented their safe retreat into their holes :

Hæsere in portis, suntque capti ab hostibus
Quos immolatos victor, avidio dentibus
Capacis alvi mersit, tartareo specu.

This fable is much superior to that of the large and small fish, but only because the author has been more correct and precise in his moral, by exposing the folly and danger of vain pursuits after greatness, and not of greatness itself: and it is his success, in this respect, which infuses so much spirit into the fable.

Generally speaking, Mr. Batteux confounds the action of the fable with that of the epopee and the drama. The object of the heroic and the dramatic poets is to raise the passions, and this they cannot do without imitating them; which is not to be effected without placing before themselves a certain grand general object, which will embrace a developement and display of the various motives to action which operate upon mankind. The fabulist, on the contrary, has nothing to do with our passions, but simply with our perception.

He only wants, in a forcible manner, to convince us of some truth, which he endeavours to effect by the narrative of an occurrence, whether originating in the presumed intention of the actors or not ; and, having succeeded, he is careless of any thing further. He even, sometimes, leaves the fate of his actors altogether undecided, as in the following fable :

“ The wolf accused the fox of theft ; the fox denied having committed it, and the monkey was chosen judge. Plaintiff and defendant pleaded in accusation and defence, and, at length, the monkey pronounced judgment :”

Tu non videris perdidisse, quod petis

Te credo surrupuisse, quod pulcher negas.

Phædrus, lib. i. fab. 10.

Here the fable ends, for the moral lies in the judgment pronounced by the monkey, which the fabulist had alone in view ; but is the transaction at an end, which the fable began by narrating ? Let us suppose the representation of this story on the stage, and it will be immediately perceived, that this piece of wit forms a point, but not a termination. The spectators would not have been satisfied with a supposed close of the transaction behind the scenes.

“ A poor sickly and suffering old man at length

became weary of his existence, and throwing his burthen from off his shoulders, called on Death. Death appeared, and the old man trembled, and began to think a miserable existence better than none at all. 'Why am I called, what shall I do for thee?' exclaimed Death. 'Nothing, kind Death,' returned the old man, 'but help me again to my burthen.'" (*Æsop. Fab.* 20.) The fabulist has here attained his aim; but the story is not terminated; we know not whether the old man was allowed to live on or not. These points are of consequence to the dramatist, but indifferent to the fabulist. We might advert to many more instances, by which it is rendered manifest, that the catastrophe of the fabulist differs very materially from that of the epic poet or dramatist. Thus Mr. Batteux's definition of fable cannot possibly be adopted; for, although the usual meaning of the word action is against me, according to which an object must be attained before the action is at an end, it only proves, that it ought to be modified when applied to fable, or be avoided altogether.

After considering things maturely, I will adopt the latter expedient, and therefore will not say, that the moral is conveyed in the fable by some action; but expressing myself more generally, will say, that in the fable the moral is reduced

from a general position to a particular case ; and that this particular case will *always* meet my employment of the word action, and only *now and then*, according to its employment, by Mr. Batteux. A fable will always be a succession of changes, united into a whole by the design of the fabulist, and to be united in the restricted sense of Mr. Batteux may be an advantage, but it is, certainly, not necessary. But are not my readers growing weary of these refutations ? I am, at least, becoming so myself ; there is, however, some danger of losing ourselves in a search after truth, unless we pay some attention to those who precede us, although it would be losing time to trace the route of every one. To return : I shall be glad if my readers will make me a present of the point I have been contending for, which is, that in fable we are not to look for the illustration of various truths, but only for a *general moral* ; and for the latter, not *under the allegory of action*, but in a particular case, constructed so as not merely to exhibit a similarity with the moral, or to conceal or disguise it, but to render it at once apparent and obvious.

I find in Aristotle, (vide *Aristot. Rhet.* lib. ii. cap. 20.) the following passage : “ To choose a chief magistrate by lot, is the same thing as if the master of a ship should select a pilot by lot

among his seamen, instead of choosing the most skilful." Here are two individual cases, illustrative of the same moral, the one actual, the other invented. Is the latter a fable? No one will deem it one; but if Aristotle had said, "You wish to choose your chief magistrate by lot; I fear that it will happen to you as to that captain, who, when he wanted a pilot, &c.;" it would then have become a fable: and why? what alteration has taken place? Simply that, in the first instance, the captain was introduced hypothetically, as a being in *posse*; in the latter he is a reality—a *certain* captain—*that* captain. This decides the point. The individual case in the fable assumes a reality—an actual fact. Alluding to a possibility alone, it is an instance, an example, a parable, but *not* a fable. It is worth establishing this assertion, which decides the merit of so many ambiguous fables by a few instances.

Among the Esopic fables of Phædrus, we read the following one. The beaver, a quadruped which lives chiefly in the water, carries about with him, in a natural cavity, a species of secretion, of great use in medicine. What is done by this animal when closely hunted? He tears off this receptacle, and hurls it towards its pursuers, knowing that he cannot purchase life and liberty upon any other terms. Here is an excellent moral;

but will any one call it a fable, although many will be unable to account for their hesitation. "It is merely a fact in natural history," some will say; but to this I answer, that the beaver is not presumed, in this narrative, to act from impulse, but after judgment and mature consideration; he knows why he is pursued (*γινώσκων ὁ χάριν διώκεται.*) If, however, it is by the mere exaltation of the instinct of the animal kingdom into reason, that fable is produced, it will still be asked, why is not this a fable? I reply, because it wants reality. Reality belongs to the individual alone, and no reality can be imagined without an individual case. What is here attributed to the whole species of beavers, should have been related only of one, which would have made it a fable. I will give another instance.

"Monkeys are said to give birth to two young ones at a time, one of which they fondle and bring up with the greatest attention and love, whilst they hate and neglect the other. It however singularly happens, that the mother suffocates the darling with constant embraces; while, on the contrary, the despised offspring grows up vigorous and healthy." (*Æsop. Fab. 268.*)

The above narrative is not a fable, precisely for the same reason that the former was none; and

when Lestrangle wished to make a fable of it, he thus divested it of its generality.

“A monkey had two young ones, and was very fond of one of them, and cared little for the other. Being suddenly alarmed one day, she snatched up her favourite, and ran away, but stumbling over a stone fractured its skull. In the mean time, the young one for which she had no regard, having leaped upon her back, clung to her shoulders and escaped without injury.” Here every thing is determined, and what was before a parable, is now a fable. That more than once quoted story of the Fisherman has the same fault; for seldom has a bad fable one fault alone. Every time that the net was cast, the small fish would escape and the great ones remain. Thus, this instance is not an individual one, and can only be made so by connecting it with other circumstances.

It therefore follows, that the subject of each fable should be represented as a real event, and, strictly speaking, be made an individual case: but why?—state the philosophical reason. Why may not a fabulist rest satisfied with general instances? How much could I say in answer to this question, could I depend on a sufficient proficiency in psychology on the part of my readers. I have already declined copying the whole of that which

our philosopher Wolfe has written on the subject of intuitive conception, and will therefore only quote so much here, as will tend to illustrate the sequence of my conclusions.

The intuitive perception is necessarily self-evident, and from it the symbolic one derives its clearness.

The universal exists only in the particular, and in the particular alone can be intuitively perceived.

Therefore, to bestow on a general symbolical conclusion all the clearness of which it is capable, it is necessary to reduce it to a particular instance, in order that it may be intuitively perceived.

A particular instance, in which we perceive its corresponding general motives, is an example.

General symbolical conclusions are therefore explained by examples ; and as all sciences require such conclusions, all sciences require examples.

But the science of morals must do more than merely explain general principles ; nor is clearness the only advantage of an intuitive perception. In an intuitive perception every thing is apparent at once, and we are able to draw our inference in a shorter time when expressed symbolically : it has therefore a greater influence over the will.

The degree of influence is according to the force and liveliness of the perception, and this again is

governed by the determinateness and distinctness of the individual case. The more determinate and distinct the individual case, the more forcible the intuitive perception.

The merely possible case is a species of general one; for every thing which is possible, is possible in more than one manner.

An individual case considered as merely possible, is still in some degree general, and so far weakens the effect of the intuitive perception.

It must therefore be strictly a real individual case, in order that the intuitive perception appealed to may produce the strongest impression possible.

Moral science requires, from its examples, an operation on the will, which is to be effected by reality alone; while most other sciences requiring illustration may be advanced by individual examples which are merely possible.

The general conclusion of the preceding arguments, therefore, amounts to this,—that fable requires the assumption of a positive fact, because a positive fact suggests more motives than a merely contingent or possible one, and carries a much stronger conviction.

Aristotle knew the force of reality, but attributes it to another source. It will not be amiss to give here his whole doctrine of examples : (*περὶ*

παραδειγματος, vide Aristotelis Rhetor. lib. 11. cap. 20.)

But first I will cite what he says about the distinction between different examples : Παραδειγματον δ' εἶδη δυο εσιν, ἐν μὲν γὰρ ἔσι παραδειγματος εἶδος, το λεγειν πραγματα προγεγεννημενα, ἐν δε, το αὐτα ποιειν. Τετα δ' ἐν μὲν παραβολη ἐν δε λογοί οιον οἱ αἰσωπειοι καιλιβυκοι.

This division is in general correct ; yet I should like some commentator to explain the reason of the minor division, and to inform us why there are two sorts and no more. The reasons for it might be extracted from the examples themselves, as I have already shown. Aristotle introduces the parable with ὥσπερ εἰ τις, but the fable he describes as the narrative of a real occurrence ; and the commentator would be called upon to describe it accordingly. Examples are either to be taken from history, or in failure of history, to be invented. In all cases mere possibility is to be distinguished from reality, although they cannot be entirely separated. The force of an example lies either in its simple possibility, or in its reality ; if only in the former, something similar is alone required ; but if in the latter, the possibility must be transformed into facts. In the first case, the result of our labour will be a parable ; in the latter, a fable. So far there is nothing to object against

the doctrine of Aristotle ; but in proceeding to state the merit of the fable, he says, Εἰσι δ' οἱ λόγοι δημηγορι-κοί· καὶ ἔχουσιν ἀγαθὸν τὸτο, ὅτι πραγματὰ μὲν εὗρειν ὅμοια γεγεννημένα, χαλεπὸν, λόγους δὲ ῥᾶον. Ποιεῖται γὰρ δεῖ ὥσπερ καὶ παραβολὰς, ἂν τις δυνήται τοῖς ὅμοιον ὄραν, ὅπερ ῥᾶον ἐσὶν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας. Πᾶν μὲν ἐν πορισσασθαι τὰ διὰ τῶν λόγων· χρησιμότερα δὲ πρὸς τὸ βεβαιωσασθαι τὰ διὰ τῶν πραγμάτων· ὅμοια γὰρ, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, τὰ μελλόντα τοῖς γεγενομένοις. I will for the present confine myself to the last assertion in this citation. Aristotle observes, that historical examples have a much greater power of convincing than the fable, because the past is generally similar to the future. This assertion I hold to be erroneous ; for we are only convinced of the truth of that which we have not beheld by its probability, or when, from the reasons given, it is more probable than otherwise. Now, as it is our internal sense of probability which produces our belief in the reality of an event, and as this inward sense of probability will apply equally to an invented case, what greater effect on my conviction is produced by the historical passage than by the invented fable? Moreover, it may be observed that much may be historically true which is very improbable ; and as Aristotle himself agrees in the sentence of Agatha :

Ταχ' ἂν τις εἶκος αὐτοῦ τούτ', εἶναι λέγει
 Βροτοῖσι πάλλα τογχανεῖν οὐκ εἰκότα,

And as he also says, that the past is only similar to the future, ἐπὶ το πολυ; and that the poet has full power to deviate from facts to make every thing appear probable which he offers as true; I think it follows, that so far as regards the power of convincing, the fable is even preferable to the historical example.

I will now sum up the whole of my arguments on the nature of fable, by observing, that *when we are desirous of illustrating a general moral precept by a particular instance, and in order to bestow upon that particular instance a real existence, we invent a story in which the general moral is intuitively perceptible,—such invention is called a fable.*

The foregoing is my explanation of fable, which I hope will be found as correct in principle as fruitful in application.

On the Use of Animals in Fable.

The greater part of fable has animals, and sometimes has inanimate creatures, as its actors. How is this to be regarded? Is it essential to fable that animals should be exalted into moral agents? or is it simply a machinery which shortens and facilitates the progress of the fabulist towards the attainment of his aim? Is it a custom of no real

utility, which is adhered to in honour of its first inventor, and because it is in some respects eccentric—*quod risum movet*—or what else is it? Mr. Batteaux has either not foreseen these questions, or he has been artful enough to avoid them by alluding at once to the use of animals in fable, in affording his explanation of the nature of it. He calls it the narrative of an allegorical action, which is generally attributed to animals. This is perfectly à la François. Why is it generally attributed to animals? the slower German will inquire. Among all the writers on the fine arts, Mr. Breitingen alone has touched on this point, which renders it the more necessary for me to attend to what he says. “Esop,” he tells us, “having composed his fables for the instruction of people in common life, the precepts which he sought to illustrate were well-known sentences and practical rules, which could scarcely be rendered amusing by allegorizing the actions of men themselves. This, however, would appear trite and common, and it was necessary to adopt something more novel and attractive to secure an avenue to the human heart. As narrative, however, consists of two parts, the action and the actors, the adopted novelty must be applied either to the one or to the other. The extraordinary in common life generally consists either in boldness of design, or malice or folly in per-

formance, and sometimes in an unexpected result ; but as events of this kind are very rare among men, and their usual proceedings are altogether common, it became necessary to invent actors for the fable, in order to excite attention. Those beings of a superior nature were introduced, as gods, genii, &c. which are treated as real existences, as well as the allegorical beings and personifications of the poets, such as the powers of the mind, fortune, fate, virtue, and the like. More especially was the liberty assumed of promoting animals, plants, and other inferior objects, to the rank and dignity of rational beings, by giving them reason and speech to relate to us their adventures in an intelligible language, and to become our teachers of morals.’’

Thus, according to Mr. Breiting, it is only to effect something extraordinary that animals are gifted with speech and made rational in fable ; and in consequence he considers fable in its origin and essence as nothing but an instructive wonderful story. This is the second explanation of this author on fable, to which I have already adverted, and to which I promised to again allude.

The principal point in this investigation is to ascertain, in the first instance, whether the introduction of animals into a fable really makes it wonderful ; for if not, his whole theory falls at once to the ground.

How can it be for the sake of the wonderful that animals are introduced into fable? The wonderful, according to the same author, is divested of the appearance of truth and probability; and this being the case, how is the costume of the ancients, for the management of which they even constituted a rule, to be reconciled to it? The ancients chose to begin their fables with *φασι*, with the accusative case after it. The Greek rhetoricians briefly call this the fable in the accusative, (*ταῖς αἰτιατικαῖς*) and as referring to it. Theon, in his exercises, quotes a passage from Aristotle, where the philosopher allows this use, and only thinks it more advisable to refer to antiquity at the beginning of a fable, than to speak in the first person, in order to avoid *the appearance of relating something impossible*, (*ἵνα παραμυθησωνται το δοκεῖν ἀδυνατα λεγεῖν.*)

If such was the opinion of the ancients,—if they wished to take away the appearance of impossibility as much as they were able, they certainly could not adopt the employment of animals as a source of the surprising.

Further, according to Mr. Breiting, the wonderful may be defined the highest degree of novelty; but if so, the novelty must be wonderful not only in its own nature, but in reference to our own conceptions. That alone is wonderful which

apparently varies from the natural course of events; and of the wonderful, even of this description, that alone affects us which appears so to our common conceptions. To a diligent reader of the Bible, the greatest of all wonders recorded there will not make the same impression on his mind as when he first read of them; he at last reads with as little surprise that the sun stood still, as he actually sees the same sun rise and go down every day. The wonder is always the same, but not our conceptions when we think of it. The speaking of the animals in the fable would in the like manner, being introduced into all of them, soon lose its effect on the reader in regard to the extraordinary, although quite as extraordinary in itself as ever. But to what purpose are these observations? That which can be pulled down at once need not be first shaken. That animals and other irrational creatures speak, is a mere hypothesis, and no wonder. When I read in the Scriptures that the Lord opened the mouth of the ass which spoke to Balaam, then I read something wonderful; but when I read in Esop, (*Fable* 316,) "While animals yet talked, the sheep said to the shepherd, &c." it is evident to me that the fabulist did not mean to tell any thing wonderful; but on the contrary, something which was quite natural, at a time, which, with the permission of the reader, he

assumes to have once existed. This is so evident, I decline adding any thing more to it, and will proceed at once to the true cause, or that, at least, which I conceive to be the true cause, why the fabulist finds animals more suitable to his purpose than human beings. That cause I conceive to be, *the extent of knowledge possessed of the general character and properties of animals*. If even instances abound in history, in which this or that moral may be intuitively perceived, will it be equally perceptible to every one; by those, for instance, who are wholly unacquainted with the character of the actors? Impossible! and then how many characters are so distinguished in history, as to excite in every one corresponding notions and ideas of the qualities possessed, as soon as they are mentioned? In order, therefore, to avoid the necessity of explanatory detail, which would, after all, leave the matter doubtful in the minds of the majority, the fabulist limited himself to a smaller sphere, and illustrated from beings which he was certain would excite the same notions in all minds, and consequently convey the moral to the most uncultivated as well as to the most learned of those for whom he laboured.

Again, as among these beings there are but few which could naturally assume the character of free agents, it was necessary, upon hypothesis, to

extend their capabilities, and exalt their nature, for the new province assigned to them.

Suppose, for instance, the names of Nero and Britannicus were mentioned in the way of fable, how many are unacquainted with the associations connected with those names;—who was the former, who the latter, and what the relation they stood in to each other? Allude to the wolf and the lamb, and all the world will know the character of one and the other, and the manner in which they must be relatively considered. These names, by at once exciting their corresponding images, instantly produce an intuitive perception, which would not be the case with the names of Nero and Britannicus. Then, as the properties of rational beings cannot be conveyed to the imagination by the mere mention of them, the fabulist is fully justified in his resort to animals generally, and even to still lower creatures.

If in the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb, we were to substitute the words Nero and Britannicus for the names of the two animals, it would be no longer a fable for mankind in general; if, however, instead of the wolf and the lamb, we used the terms giant and dwarf, it would lose less; for these are individuals whose properties are apparent from the simple mention of their names.

Or suppose that it was changed into a fable

with human actors, as, "A priest came to the poor man of the prophet Nathan, (vide 2 Sam. c. xii.) and said to him, 'Bring your white lamb to the altar, for the Lord wants a sacrifice.' The poor man answered, and said, 'My neighbour has a whole flock, and I have only this single lamb.' 'But you vowed him to the Lord, because he blessed your fields,' replied the priest. 'I have no fields,' returned the poor man. 'Well, then, it was when he restored your son to health,' retorted the priest.' 'Alas, the Lord has taken my son for a sacrifice already,' exclaimed the man. 'Wicked wretch!' roars out the priest, 'you blaspheme!' and forthwith he forces the lamb to the altar."

If, in this fable, little is lost, it is because the relative characters of the human actors are instantly suggested by the commencement. The actors, however, by which this fable loses the least, are the rat and the cat, (vide *Æsop. Fab. 6.*) but not perceiving the relation borne by one of these animals to the other so readily as that between the wolf and the lamb, the latter are still the most proper for the purpose of the fabulist. It is said by a certain author, that a fable assumes a distinction peculiarly by the adoption of extraordinary names. "It would not be a bad fable if we were to say: A man, beholding some fine pears

on a very high tree, was strongly inclined to taste them. He tried for a long time to climb the tree, but in vain ; on which he turned his back upon it, exclaiming, 'These pears are not ripe : I had better leave them alone.' This story would not, however, be sufficiently forcible." I agree with this author, that the foregoing story would be very flat, and unworthy the name of a fable ; but is it so, because no animal talks and acts in it ? Certainly not ; but because we connect with the name of fox a certain character from which we deduce the motive of his actions ; whereas the word man excites in us no notion of a particular character. "A man"—this is too general, and immediately suggests the question of what sort of a man, as men possess characters and habits so exceedingly various ; but as soon as a fox is spoken of, I am no longer at a loss. If instead of saying "a man" generally, the word Gascon * was employed, the fable would not lose quite so much by the omission of the fox, especially if other circumstances were rendered accordant, and the Gascon made to long after something else than pears.

If, therefore, it is only in consequence of the generally known character of animals that the

* A native of Gascony, proverbial for the shrewdness and vanity of its natives.

fabulist makes use of them, I am surprised that the omission of the musical swan, and of the pelican which feeds its young with its own blood, should be made a subject of praise, as if an accurate knowledge of natural history was necessary to the fable. If such attributes are notorious, they may be made use of, whether sanctioned by the naturalist or not. Let him who would deprive us of them first furnish us with a source of similar attributes.

The lower we descend in the scale of beings, the less frequently do we meet with such generally known and distinctive characters. This is the reason why the fabulist so seldom makes use of the vegetable kingdom, still less of the mineral, and least of all of the productions of art ; for I cannot think that it is owing to the difficulty of accommodating the imagination to the fiction of their thinking and acting. The fable of the Metal and Earthen Pots is not in the least degree the worse for the inanimate nature of the actors, any more than that of the Monkey is the better for the greater resemblance of that animal to man. However, while I maintain that the obvious and distinctive characters of animals form the principal cause of the use made of them by the fabulist, I do not assert that this is their only use to him. On the contrary, I am satisfied, among other things, that

they serve to heighten the pleasure of comparison in the compound fables, which would be scarcely perceptible were both the real and the invented case to be made out with human actors ; but as this only applies to the compound, and not to the primary fable, it cannot be taken into much account. I will, at the same time, venture another reason why animals are more adapted for fable than human beings ; a reason, the discovery of which is an affair more of feeling than of argument. The object of the fable is the clear and forcible perception of some moral truth, and as nothing obscures our perceptions more than our passions and our sympathies, the fabulist must, as much as possible, avoid their interference ; which cannot be done when the actors are human beings. Let us once more refer to the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb, and suppose it changed, as I have before imagined, into that of the Priest and the Poor Man of the prophet Nathan. We pity the lamb ; but the pity is so weak, it produces no emotion to carry away attention from the moral. In respect to the poor man, the case is very different ; if I am not mistaken, the compassion for the poor man would be too strong for the occasion, and we should overlook the general moral in the particular hardship,

On the Division of the Fable.

Fables admit of division; and of one, arising from the variety of their application, I have already treated. Fables are either strictly confined to a general moral, and are simple; or applied to a real case, which, together with some general moral, is contained in the fable, and renders it compound. The use of this distinction I have illustrated in more than one instance.

Another division is derivable from the variety of tendency in the moral. There are some moral points which can be better illustrated by an instance, in the form of contrast, than by one of resemblance. This forms the distinction of direct and indirect fables. I do not, however, mean to treat here on this division, and still less on the unphilosophical classification, according to the inventor. There is, however, a distinction arising out of the various actors in the fable, on which I am desirous of saying a word or two.

Aphthonius is, undoubtedly, the oldest, who mentions this latter distinction. “Τὸ δὲ μῦθος,” he says in his Exercises, “τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ λογικόν, τὸ δὲ ἠθικόν τὸ δὲ μικτόν. Καὶ λογικόν μὲν ἐν ᾧ ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπος τε πλαστὰ ἢ θικόν δὲ τὸ τῶν ἄλλογων ἡθος ἀπομιμουμένον μικτόν δὲ τὸ ἀμφοτέρων ἄλογον καὶ λογικόν.

Attending to this distinction, there are three sorts of fables : the *rational*, in which man is the actor ; the *moral*, in which rational beings appear ; and the *mixed*, which admit of actors both rational and irrational. The principal fault of this division is obvious ; it does not embrace the whole of the subject ; for what, under it, is to become of those fables which advert to gods, genii, and allegorical personages ? Apthonius limits the rational fable, exclusively, to those which contain human actors ; but even without this last objection, the whole division must be deemed superficial, as it gives us not the least insight into the nature of fable. Mr. Batteux had better have been entirely silent in regard to this division of fable, than quote Apthonius ; but, in fact, this is a little device here, on the part of Mr. Batteux. Just before, when speaking of the personages of fable, he says, that not only the wolf and the lamb, the oak and reed, the iron and the earthen pots, are admissible, but that the offspring of understanding and imagination are alone excluded, and that because it would be more difficult to characteristically and distinctively embody them, than to bestow attributes upon substances more operative on our sensations. This was directed against La Motte, who often makes use of allegorical beings in his fables, which not proving agreeable to the

taste of Mr. Batteux, he avails himself of the authority of Aphonius, in order to tacitly insinuate, that gods and allegorical personages are not properly admissible in the genuine Esopic fable. According to him, the latter is a species of pastime, which is distinguished by the simplicity and naïveté of its actors ;—a stage, in which we behold neither Caesar nor Alexander, but the ant and the fly. Upon this ground, Mr. Batteux could not but disapprove of the higher poetical views of M. de la Motte, and therefore rejects them, and along with them a great many of the best fables of the ancients, by the adoption of a fictitious division, on the poor authority of Aphonius.

Mr. Wolfe, (vide *Philosophia Practicæ Universalis*, pars post, § 303,) has also retained the division of Aphonius, but has made a worthier use of it. He deems the distinction between moral and rational fables untenable, for every fable is, or ought to be, both rational and moral ;—moral, so far as it has been invented for the illustration of a moral truth ; and rational, because every fable must appeal unto reason : as, however, these terms have been customary, he does not set them aside. Moreover, Mr. Wolfe thinks that Aphonius did not intend all this by his division, and that he ought to be judged by his

intentions rather than by his words. Therefore, while he retains the division of Aphonius, he ably infuses a truth into it, so as to make it appear to have been there before. "When we invent some occurrences," he observes, "we either attribute to the subject of invention predicates or actions which are suitable to their nature, or such as are otherwise. In the former instance they are rational fables, in the latter moral; and when they partake something of both, they are called mixed." According to the division of Mr. Wolfe, therefore, fables are not distinguished by the different nature of their actors, but by the difference of the things affirmed of them. A fable may have human beings for its actors, and yet be irrational; in the same manner as it may be moral, although animals form the subject of it. The already-quoted fable of the Two Fighting Cocks would, according to Aphonius, be a moral, and according to Mr. Wolfe, a rational fable, because nothing is attributed to the cocks beyond their nature. It is the same with many others, as, for instance, the Birdcatcher and the Serpent, the Dog and the Cock, the Dog and the Gardener, the Shepherd and the Wolf, (vide *Fab. Æsop.* 32. 34. 67. 71.) All these are fables, which, according to Wolfe's division, are rational. Shall I submit to this division of our philosopher? I

can scarcely say. I have, certainly, nothing to advance against its logical correctness, as it includes every thing which it ought to include ; but an author may be a good logician without being a man of taste ; and Mr. Wolfe was not the latter. Perhaps his ideas were more correct than his expressions ; for he says, that there may be some fables in which sayings and doings are attributed to the subjects which do not belong to their natures. These words, "do not belong," are liable to be misunderstood ; it might be inferred from them, that the fabulist is not bound to pay any attention to the nature of the beings which he introduces into his fable. He may make the sheep act boldly, the wolf with meekness, and the ass witty ; he may employ pigeons as hawks, and make the hares run after the dogs ; all which are unnatural ; but the poet who invents a moral fable, may attribute these qualities if he pleases :—how necessary to prevent such a misinterpretation of Mr. Wolfe's meaning.

After the foregoing digression, I may be allowed to resume my own course, in which I shall lose sight as little as possible of this philosopher, and possibly meet with him again in the sequel. I have already said, and, I hope, proved, that the essential difference between the fable and the parable, or example in general, is the exalting

the individual case into a reality in the former ; which reality is so essential to fable, it can better dispense with possibility. It is less inimical to the nature of fable, that the supposed case be deemed impossible, except upon hypothesis, than that it should not be regarded as a reality, under such hypothesis. As regards reality, therefore, the fable will admit of no modification, but only as to possibility, which must be either conditional or unconditional. The fables, the precise incidents of which are possible, I will call **RATIONAL FABLES** ; those which are only so under implied conditions, I will denominate **MORAL FABLES**. Rational fables admit not of any subdivision, but the moral ones do ; for their conditions may refer either to the subjects or predicates of these fables. The case is either possible, when it is supposed that certain beings exist, or when it is assumed that certain predicates, and no other, belong to particular existing objects, to a determinate extent and degree. The fables in which the actors are themselves imaginary, I would call *Mythological Fables* ; and those in which certain attributes are presumed to exist in a degree beyond nature, I would term *Hyper-physical Fables*.

I will explain this division by some examples : The fable of the Blind and the Lame, of the Bird-catcher and the Serpent, the Two Fighting Cocks,

and the Dog and the Gardener, are all rational fables, although irrational animals as well as human beings are the actors, for nothing is attributed to any of them which is not natural to them. The fables of Apollo and Jupiter, Hercules and Plutus, and of the gods who take various trees under their protection,—in short, all fables which contain gods, allegorical persons, spirits, spectres, and other creatures of imagination,—as, for instance, the phoenix,—are all moral fables, that is to say, mythologically moral; for in all them it is assumed that these beings have existed, or still exist, and the narrative is only possible under such assumption. (Vide *Æsop.* 287. *Phædrus*, lib. iv. fab. 11. lib. iii. fab. 15.) The fables of the Wolf and the Lamb, the Fox and the Stork, the Viper and the File, the Trees and the Thorn, the Olive-tree and the Reed, are also moral fables, but hyper-physically moral, for the nature of the real beings is exalted, and the boundaries of their capability extended. (Vide *Phædrus*, lib. i. fab. 1. lib. ii. fab. 25. lib. iv. fab. 7. *Fab. Æsop.* 313. 143.)

One thing must be kept in mind here; let it not be supposed that this sort of fable is limited to the sensitive part of the animal and vegetable creation; the poet may also heighten the nature of man, and exalt his natural powers. A fable

in which a prophet is an actor, is a moral fable, for a prophet is a man whose common nature is exalted; or if the giants assailing heaven was to be formed into an Esopic fable, including the moral fact, that the uplifted mountains fell back and buried the assailants under their ruins, such fable would be an hyper-physical moral fable.

From these two sorts of rational and moral fables, I also deduce a mixed class, containing those in which the subject is partly possible in itself, and partly so under implied conditions. These fables may be of three different kinds: the *Rational Mythological* fable, as Hercules and the Carter, and the poor Man and Death, (*Fab. Æsop.* 336. 20.) The *Rational Hyper-physical* fable, as the Woodcutter and the Fox, and the Huntsman and the Lion, (*Æsop. Fab.* 127, 280.) And lastly, the *Hyper-physical Mythological* fable, as Jupiter and the Camel, Jupiter and the Serpent, (*Fab. Æsop.* 197, 189.)

This division of fable includes the entire variety; I trust, indeed, that none can be quoted which it excludes, which is not the case with all the other divisions which distinguish only the actors. The divisions of Mr. Breitinger are not exempt from this defect, although his determining principle is the degree of the wonderful; for as the degree of the wonderful applies only to the

actors, there is only the appearance without the reality of correctness. "In some fables," he observes, "the extraordinary has its various degrees, the lowest degree of which exists in this sort of fable, in which human beings are the actors, because in them the probable has an ascendancy over the wonderful, they may therefore be called probable, or in reference to the agents, human fables. A greater degree of the extraordinary is apparent in that class of fables in which other actors than human beings are introduced, such as beings of a superior nature, like the gods of the heathen mythology; or of a lower rank than man, as irrational animals and plants. These, because the extraordinary exceeds the probable, may not be improperly called wonderful; and in regard to the subject, fables of gods or of animals." But what, in this division, becomes of the fable of the Two Pots, or of the Two Trees and the Thorn—are they also to be called fables of animals, or must each sort be ranged under a name of its own? How would this difficulty increase, if all the mixed fables were to be taken into account: but in order to give an instance of the insufficiency of this division of Mr. Breiting, let us consider the already-cited fable of the Gardener and his Dog, or that still more familiar one of the Ploughman

and the Serpent ; though not in the way which Phædrus relates it, but as it is to be met with in the Greek fables. Both these fables have so slight a degree of the supernatural, they must be classed among the probable or human fables ; yet in such animals appear, and as regards this point, they are mixed fables, in which the extraordinary is above the probable. It must, therefore, be determined, whether the dog and the serpent are actors in the fable or not, before it can be settled to what class they belong.

I will not be detained any longer by these trifles, but conclude with an observation which applies principally to the hyper-physical fables, which I would omit, as being essential to the forming a correct opinion on my own fables. The question is, how far the fabulist is justified in exalting the nature of animals and other subordinate creatures, and how near he may bring them to human nature ? My answer is briefly this—as near or as distant as he pleases, with this single condition, that from all which they do or say, that character should be deducible, for the sake of which he finds the animals in question the most convenient for his purpose. If this be attended to, if they do not act and speak in such a way as any other animal may just as well speak and act, they will not appear strange, whatever

wit and acuteness they may exhibit. Having once given them reason and speech, we must allow them all the modifications of will and perception which belong to these attributes ; only, as already stated, it is necessary that their character should be apparent from the whole of the fable, and if this takes place, the illusion is consistent and complete. It is surprising how many sophisms about *causæ ut causæ* the writers on this subject have uttered. Thus the author of the Critical Letters observes : “ For this reason, a connected series of designs cannot be properly attributed to animals, for these require a portion of reason surpassing instinct. The instinct of animals can only diffuse dim and bounded rays ; on which account, fables of animals are very brief, and usually exhibit only one design or purpose. They are not adapted to represent more than one human feature at a time. It is extravagant in the Abbé Bossu to assert that the Esopic fable is as extensive as the epic ; which can never be, unless the animals are allowed to give up their own nature altogether, and to become human beings ; or in comic songs, when animals are introduced in masquerade, and made to imitate men.”

How curiously is all this deduced from the nature of animals, whereas the subject of consideration is the nature of fable. I admit that it is

not proper to extend the Esopic fable like that of an epic poem ; but not because it is not allowable to make animals capable of a connected series of purposes, lest they should exhibit too much of human nature, but because, if carried to so great an extent, the unity of the fable would be lost, and the moral be rendered less apparent. The intuitive perception appealed to in the fable, requires that the individual case it contains should be rendered apparent at once, which cannot be effected when the parts are too various and distant from one another. This latter is the reason why the epic poet seeks not to inculcate a specific moral ; because if he wished to do so, although discoverable in the plan of his poem, it would be lost in the execution, except to the critic, who is generally ingenious enough to find one whether any be intended or not. That it is not in consequence of the employment of animals that the Esopic fable is not extended, is obvious from this, that even the fables in which human beings are the actors are equally restricted. The fable of the *Lame and the Blind*, or that of the *Poor Man and Death*, cannot, for the same reason, be lengthened to an epic poem, any more than that of the *Wolf and the Lamb*, or of the *Fox and the Stork* : besides, how many fables could be cited, in which animals are made to possess much more than

transient rays of reason, and to act on distinct views ; as, for instance, that of the Eagle, the Cat, and the Swine, (*Phædrus*, lib. ii. fab. 4.) Supposing, however, that it was desirable to extend an Esopic fable, how is the fabulist to proceed, to avoid encountering these difficulties ? My opinion is as follows : in the first place, there should be only one moral ; secondly, the various parts should be so constructed, that their general purpose and connection be at once apparent ; thirdly, every one of these parts should form a particular whole, and constitute a fable in itself, so that the general fable should be homogenous. In short, the moral of such a fable must be distributed into its parts, each of them appealing to an individual perception, and all of them together illustrating a general one. My own fable of the Wolf and the Shepherd, in seven parts, may be regarded as a specimen of this class of fable ; the moral deducible from all the seven parts being, collectively, as follows : we should not drive an old offender into desperation, nor deprive him of the means of reforming, however forced and late his repentance may be. The fact of driving an offender to desperation I have divided, and detailed various failures of the wolf in his attempts to obtain his prey in future in a peaceable manner. Each

of these attempts I have made the subject of a particular fable, which exhibits a moral of its own, unconnected with that of the general fable. That which I have done in this fable, and in the Disputes for Precedence among the Animals, in four parts, another might carry further with a more fertile general moral. I satisfy myself with showing the possibility.

On the Style of delivering Fable.

What style is the most adapted for fable? Is Esop, Phædrus, or La Fontaine, the best model?

Whether Esop himself wrote the fables which go under his name, and arranged them in a book, is not yet decided; but supposing he even did so, it is certain that not one of his fables has reached us in his own style. In speaking of the fables of Esop, therefore, in this essay, I allude only to those beautiful fables in the Grecian collection, to which his name is prefixed. To judge according to these, his narrative is constructed with the most finished precision; he nowhere delays in order to describe, but hastens directly to his point; he knew of no medium between the necessary and the useless. This quality is justly characterised by De la Motte, and the precision and brevity in

which Esop so much excelled, was found to be so congenial with the nature of fable by the ancients, they erected it into a general rule. Theon, among others, urges it in the most explicit terms.

Even Phædrus, whose object it was to improve the inventions of Esop by the adoption of verse, paid the strictest attention to this rule; and, whenever he deviates from it, versification and poetical ornament form the cause; the most simple verse imperceptibly leading us aside, and carrying us away from our primary intentions.

But La Fontaine—that singular genius La Fontaine! No, I have nothing to advance against this author himself, but only against his imitators and admirers. La Fontaine was too well acquainted with the ancients not to know what both their models and their genius required in a good fable. He was aware that brevity is the soul of fable, and that its greatest ornament is to have none at all. He confessed, with the most amiable candour, “that the elegant precision and conciseness by which Phædrus so much recommends himself, will not be found in his fables.” The attainment of these qualities was partly prevented by his language; and because he could not imitate Phædrus in his leading merit, he thought “qu’il falloit en récompense égayer l’ouvrage plus qu’il n’a fait.” “All the ornament,” he observes,

“with which I decorate my fables, amounts to nothing more than a substitute for essential beauties, which it is out of my power to supply.” What a confession! In my eyes, the avowal confers on La Fontaine more honour than his fables; yet how singularly was it received by the French public. In their opinion, La Fontaine only intended to pass a compliment, and they accepted the substitute for something more than he intended. It could scarcely be otherwise; abounding with so many attractions for the French taste, according to which nothing can excel the vivacious. One of their wits, who had the misfortune to live a wit for a hundred years, (M. Fontenelle,) was even of opinion, that La Fontaine, through mere stupidity, (*par bêtise*,) placed himself below Phædrus; which remark De la Motte calls witty, yet solid, (*plaisant, mais solide*.)

However, although La Fontaine held his own comic loquacity condemned by the great model, Phædrus, he was still anxious not to be utterly deprived of support from the ancients. He therefore adds: “I could the better venture to give this amusing appearance to my fables, because Quintilian observes, that the narrative cannot be made too pleasant, (*égayer*.) I need not give any further reason; it is sufficient to be able to quote Quintilian.” There are two things to be remembered

in reference to this authority : it is true that Quintilian says, “ Ego vero narrationem, ut si ullam partem, orationis omni, qua potest, gratia et Venere exornandam puto ;” (*Quintilian. Inst. Orat. lib. iv. cap. 2.;*) which must be the passage to which La Fontaine refers, But by these Graces—this Venus—which he would have infused into the narrative as much as possible, although always in due submission to the nature of the subject, (*sed plurimum refert, quæ sit natura ejus rei quam exponimus,*) is mirth or drollery alluded to? I think, on the contrary, that it is thereby absolutely prohibited. Moreover, Quintilian alludes to the narrative of a fact in a Grecian oration; and what he says on that subject, La Fontaine applies, in opposition of the rule of the ancients, to fable. He might have read this rule in Theon, who observes : “ Ἐν δὲ τοῖς μυθοῖς ἀπλοῦστεραν τὴν ἐρμηνείαν εἶναι δεῖ καὶ προσφνῇ καὶ ὡς δυνατόν, ἀκατασχευόν τε καὶ σαφῆ.” The narrative of a fable should be still more plain, and as compact as possible, without ornament or figure : the simple perspective ought to suffice.

I pardon La Fontaine for thus misapplying the authority of Quintilian, for we know how the French are in the habit of reading the classics. They even peruse their own authors in the same volatile manner, and here is an instance : De la

Motte, speaking of La Fontaine, observes, "Altogether original as he was in his manner, he was as great an admirer of the ancients, as if they had been his models; brevity is the soul of fable, and it is useless to bring reason for it; it is sufficient that it is said by Quintilian: 'Tout originel qu'il est dans les maniers, il étoit admirateur des anciens jusqu'à la prévention, comme s'ils eussent été ses modèles. La brièveté, dit-il, est l'âme de la fable, et il est inutile d'en apporter les raisons, c'est assez que Quintilian l'ait dit.'" (Vide *Discours sur la Fable*, p. 17.) There can scarcely be a stronger instance of inaccurate quotation. La Fontaine attributes to another critic an observation, that brevity is the soul of fable, or rather makes it himself, for he does not refer to Quintilian regarding the brevity, but the witty or mirthful, (plaisant,) which should prevail in fable; the former expression is not to be found in Quintilian at all, nor does La Fontaine say it is: but I now come to the point itself.

The universal applause bestowed upon La Fontaine for his sprightly mode of narrative, was rapidly the cause of fables being regarded in quite a different point of view from that in which they were considered by the Greeks. Among the ancients, fable was held to belong to the sphere of philosophy, from which the professors of rhetoric

transferred it to their own. Aristotle does not treat of fable in his Poetics, but in his Rhetoric; and in the same manner Aphthonius and Theon. Even with the moderns, if we wished, before the time of La Fontaine, to learn any thing about the Esopic fable, we had to consult the treatises on rhetoric. That author turned fable into a pleasant poetical pastime, and attracted a great number of followers, who thought they could not procure the title of poet more cheaply, than by the composition of indifferent fables, in long metre. The professors of poetry, therefore, took possession of the province of fable; and the professors of rhetoric allowing of it, the latter ceased to regard fable as a mode of producing an intuitive perception of moral truths, and the former to behold it merely as a species of trifling; which is pretty much the case at present. One who has been brought up in the school of the ancients, and who regards the fable *ἐμπηγεία ἀκατασκευός*, will be surprised to find in Mr. Batteux a long list of ornaments with which the narrative of fable may be decorated; he will exclaim, has the literary nature of things changed among the moderns? for all these ornaments are adverse to the nature of fable; which I will now endeavour to prove.

If a moral truth is to shine through a fable, the whole of it must be apparent at a single view;

and in order to be so, the fable must be short. All ornaments, however, infringe upon brevity, since without them the fable might be still shorter, and therefore as far as they are unnecessary appendages, all kinds of embellishment are opposed to one of the principal requisites of fable. It is with a view to brevity that the fabulist makes use of animals of known character, which is recognised the instant they are mentioned, to this palpable avoidance of description. Now let us attend to Mr. Batteux, who says, that the ornaments of fable consist first in the mode of describing persons, places, and situations; that is to say, we should not write at once, "A fox," but

Un vieux renard, mais de plus fins,
Grand croqueur de poulets, grand preneur de lapins.

Thus the fabulist selects the fox, because it at once conveys the notion of an arch knave; and the poet gives up the whole of this advantage, in order to have the pleasure of describing an object which is primarily selected because it needs no description.

As the fabulist is only anxious to produce the intuitive perception of a single moral truth, in its arrangement he carefully avoids occupying our attention with any thing else, much less will he

adopt any style or mode of narrative which is likely to introduce additional truths, by the introduction of moral sentences or otherwise ; yet Mr. Batteux goes on to say : "The second ornament of fable consists in the thoughts, that is, in such as are prominent and distinguished from the rest in a peculiar manner." His third ornament, the allusion, is equally absurd ; and, to crown all, he denominates the whole of them, "ornaments of those narratives only, the object of which is amusement." Is fable, then, to be deemed a narrative of this description ? Why am I so fastidious as to maintain the contrary ? Why bear utility alone in mind ? Why believe that this utility is itself a grace of sufficient pretension to supersede the necessity of any other ? La Fontaine, and his imitators, experience the same fate as the Man with his Bow, (Vide Fable, No. LXVI.) The man wanted his bow to be finely decorated, and employed an artist to cut figures upon it. The artist, who had too much taste not to feel the species of decoration which would become a bow, carved thereon a beautiful representation of a chase, on which the delighted archer received back his bow, which broke the first time that he attempted to shoot with it. Was this accident the fault of the artist ? Who told the man to shoot with it as before ? He should have deposited his bow

in his armoury, and have delighted his eyes with it. To shoot with such a bow indeed ! Plato, who banished all the poets from his commonwealth, allowed Esop to remain ; but now that La Fontaine has thus decorated him, he will be also told to depart. But what care we, it will be said, for the opinion of so whimsical an old personage as Plato ? Be it so ; but as I make so many allowances for others, I entreat that some may be made for myself, who, alas, have not entertained the noble design of making the world merry by my fables. On the contrary, I had always some particular moral in view, which I strove to illustrate by a particular case for my own edification ; for which purpose I recorded it as simply as possible, and although I do not delight the world at present, I may be valued by posterity. The new fables of Abstemius are as ably versified as those of Esop ; and who knows what may some day be done with mine, if their intrinsic merit preserve them long enough ? Thus thinking, I venture to offer my simple prose.

People, however, may inquire, for what reason, if even dissatisfied with La Fontaine, I fall into the other extreme ? Why have I not pursued the medium manner of Phædrus, and versified with the graceful brevity of that Roman ? I will answer this question in two ways. In the first

place, and here I shall be readily believed, because I feel myself incapable of attaining the concise grace of the versification of Phædrus. La Fontaine, who felt the same difficulty, lays the blame on his language ; but I have a better opinion of mine, and believe that a man of genius may adapt it to any form or subject he chooses. A man of genius discovers capabilities in every language ; the fault I therefore avow to be my own ; having never so completely mastered versification, as not to fear that metre and rhyme would prove too much for me, to the loss of the necessary brevity, and, possibly also, of still more essential qualities. So much for one of my reasons : the second, if I must needs confess it, is, that I am not perfectly satisfied with Phædrus himself. M. De la Motte finds nothing wherewith to blame in the latter, but that he places his moral too frequently at the commencement of his fables, and that he sometimes gives a moral which is not sufficiently illustrated by his narrative. The first objection is trifling, but the second is of more importance, and but too well founded. However, I will not employ myself in proving the justice of the imputations of others, but proceed to my own ; one of which is, that so often as Phædrus deviates a single step from the simplicity of the Grecian original, he commits an awkward blunder.

Many instances may be produced of this ; as for example :

FAB. IV. LIB. I.

Canis per flumen carnem dum ferret natans,
Lympharum in speculo vidit simulacrum suum, &c.

This is impossible ; a dog swimming cannot perceive his image in the water, the water being then so much disturbed. The Grecian fable simply says, that he crossed the river : *κυων κρεας εχεσα ποταμον διεβαινε*. Athonius determines the circumstance with still greater caution : *κρεας αρπασα τις κυων παρ' αυτην διηει την οχδην* : the dog went on the bank of the river.

FAB. V. LIB. I.

Vacca et capella, et patiens ovis injuriæ,
Socii fuere cum leone in saltibus.

What companions ! How is it possible that these four animals could unite for a common purpose ; and much more to go to hunt together. The critics have long since remarked upon this absurdity, but no one has, at the same time, observed, that it is attributable to Phædrus alone. In the Greek, the actors are the lion and the wild ass, (*οναγρος*,) which is known to be partly carnivorous, and, consequently, may take a part

in the pursuit of prey : and then how miserable is the division in Phædrus :

Ego primam tollo, nominor quia leo :
 Secundam, quia sum fortis, tribuetis mihi ;
 Tum quia plus valeo, me sequetur tertia ;
 Malo afficietur, si quis quartam tetigerit.

On the contrary, how excellent is this in the Greek. The lion divides the prey into three parts ; and, as among the ancients, a part of every booty was set aside for the monarch or the state, the lion seizes the first part, and says, “ This belongs to me, because I am king, βασιλεὺς γὰρ εἰμι ; the second part belongs to me also by right of equal division ; and as to the third part, κακὸν μέγα σοι ποιήσει, εἰ μὴ ἐδέλῃς φυγεῖν. Mischief will befall him who pretends to it.”

FAB. XI. LIB. I.

Venari asello, comite cum vellet leo,
 Contextit illum frutice, et admonuit simul
 Ut insuetâ voce terreret feras, &c.

* * * * *

Quæ dum paventes, exitus notos petunt,
 Leonis affliguntur horrendo impetu.

The lion hides the ass in the woods ; the ass makes a noise, and the various beasts taking the alarm, make their way through the accustomed

avenues, and fall into the paws of the lion. How is this to be understood? Did they all seek to escape at the same passage, or was the lion waiting at all of them at one time? How simply are all these difficulties removed in the Greek fable, in which the lion and the ass arrive at an enclosure, tenanted by wild goats; the lion sends in the ass to frighten out the goats by his terrible voice, while the lion lies in wait at the entrance, and seizes them as they pass.

FAB. IX. LIB. IV.

Peras imposuit Jupiter nobis duas :
Propriis repletam vitiis post tergum dedit,
Alienis ante pectus suspendit gravem.

Jupiter places these wallets upon us; it is owing to him, therefore, that we do not see our own faults, and are only accurate in the detection of the faults of others; an absurdity which almost amounts to that which is deemed blasphemy. The Greeks leave Jupiter entirely out of the fable, and say, *Ανθρωπος δυο πηρας έκαστος φερει*, or *δυο πηρας εξημμεθα τι τρακελον*, &c.

This is enough for a specimen; I intend to prove my accusation more fully in another place, and, perhaps, by an edition of Phædrus, undertaken by myself.

On the Use of Fables in Schools.

I will not treat here of the use of fables, which point belongs to moral philosophy ; and how can I say more of it than Mr. Wolfe ? Still less do I intend to treat of the trivial use made of fables by the ancient rhetoricians, who, in their exercises, made their scholars decline a fable through all its oblique cases, or to extend or contract it. This can only be done to the injury of the fable, which, as such, can be well narrated in one way alone. The use which I here intend to point out rather than to investigate, might be properly denominated, the inductive use of fable. Why are we so much in want of invention and original thinking in the arts and sciences ? This question will be best answered by another : why are we not better educated ? God gives the capacity, but the power must be obtained by education. The boy whose faculties are constantly cultivated and enlarged ; who is accustomed to compare every thing which he learns to-day with that which he learned yesterday ; who endeavours, by his own exertions, to obtain a knowledge of things which have not yet been taught him ; who is constantly taught to look from one science to another, to ascend from the particular to the general, and to

descend from the general to the particular;—such a boy will either turn out a man of genius, or education has nothing to do with the formation of one.

Among the exercises which should be adopted on the preceding plan, I believe that the invention of the Esopic fable might be very suitable for pupils of a certain age. Not that I intend to make fabulists of pupils generally, but because it is undeniable that the manner in which fables are invented is the same which is the best adapted to invention in general. This is the principle of reduction, in reference to which, the philosophic Wolfe observes :

“Videmus adeo, quo artificio utantur fabularum inventores, *principio* nimirum *reductionis* : quod quemadmodum ad inveniendum in genere utilissimum, ita ad fabulas inveniendas absolute necessarium est. Quoniam in arte inveniendi principium reductionis amplissimum sibi locum vindicat, absque hoc principio autem nulla effingitur fabula : nemo in dubium revocare poterit, fabularum inventores inter inventores locum habere. Neque est quod inventores abjecte de fabularum inventoribus sentiant : quod si enim fabula nomen suum tueri, nec quicquam in eadem desiderari debet, haud exigua sæpe artis est eam invenire, ita ut in aliis veritatibus inveniendis excellentes

hic vires suas deficere agnoscant, ubi in rem presentem veniunt. Fabulæ aniles nugæ sunt, quæ nihil veritatis continent, et earum autores in nugatorem, non inventorum veritatis numero sunt. Absit autem ut hisce æquipares inventores fabularum vel fabellarum, cum quibus in præsentem nobis negotium est, et quas vel inviti ni philosophiam practicam admittere tenemur, nisi praxi officere velimus." (Vide *Philosophiæ Practicæ Universalis*, pars posterior, §. 310.)

However, this principle of reduction abounds with great difficulties, as it requires an extensive knowledge of all the particular or individual things to which it is to be applied ; which is scarcely to be expected from young people. It would require us, indeed, to follow the advice of a modern author, and begin the instruction of youth with the study of natural history, and render it introductory in the lower classes to all other lessons. According to the writer in question, natural history contains the seed of all the other sciences, that of morality not excepted ; by which he undoubtedly alluded to its utility in the Esopic fable. But, supposing the pupil may possess this extensive knowledge of natural philosophy, he should rather be exercised in the pointing out than in the invention of fables. A certain critic observes : " It is only necessary to visit the woods and fields, especially

as sportsmen, to be attentive to the qualities and special properties of wild and tame animals, and to ask ourselves when any thing particular strikes us, whether it bears not some analogy to human conduct and character, and possesses the materials for a symbolic fable."

The master may very conveniently spare himself the trouble of hunting with his pupils, if he will only hunt among the ancient fables, and make use of the actors, circumstances, and situations, in such a way, as by extension, abbreviation, transmutation, or otherwise, different combinations may be formed, and new morals elicited.

For instance, the well-known fable of the Lion and the Ass begins, *Λεων και ὄνος, κοινωνίαν θεμενοί, ἐξηλθόν ἐπὶ θηραν*. Let the master stop at "The ass in company with the lion." How proud must the ass have been in such company! (See my Fable, No. VII.) The lion in company with the ass—was not the lion ashamed? (See my Fable, No. VIII.) Thus are two additional fables produced, simply by a slight turn of thought and deviation from the particular object of Esop.

The same thing may be effected by proceeding a step further in the story. The fable of the Crow, which has decorated itself with the plumes of other birds, and is quickly deprived of them; *και ὁ κολοιος ἦν παλιν κολοιος*. Perhaps,

instead of as bad, the crow became worse off than before ; perhaps, in taking away her stolen feathers, the resentful birds might deprive her of some of her own ; which is often the fate of plagiaries, who being frequently detected in passages, it may, at last, be supposed that they have stolen their own. (See my Fable, No. L.)

Again ; certain circumstances may be altered in a fable. How, if the piece of meat which the fox, by dint of flattery, obtains of the raven, be poisoned ? (See my Fable, No. LVI.) How, if the poor man who placed the frozen serpent in his bosom, had not been actuated by compassion, but by a desire to strip it of its beautiful skin,—could the man, in that case, justly complain of the ingratitude of the serpent ? (See my Fable, No. VI.)

The principal circumstance may be also borrowed from a fable, and a new one be constructed on it. The wolf swallowed a bone, which remained fast in his throat ; during the short time he was in this awkward situation, the sheep enjoyed peace. Had the wolf a right to deem this forced abstinence a virtue ? (See my Fable, No. X.) Hercules was voted into Olympus, and neglected to evince any respect for Plutus—did he act in the same manner by his adversary Juno ? or would it not be more suitable to Hercules to

thank that goddess for the persecutions which had so exalted him ? (See my Fable, No. XLVIII.)

Lastly ; endeavours may be made to render some of the fables inculcative of more noble morals ; for, among the Grecian fables, some are very defective. The asses request of Jupiter to make their lives less miserable ; Jupiter answers : *τοτε αὐτες ἀπαλλαγῆσθαι τῆς κακοπαθείας ὅταν ἔρηντες ποιήσωσι ποταμόν.*—That he will do so, when, by their natural efforts, they can form a river.

What an unbecoming answer for a divinity ! I flatter myself that I have made a better fable of it. (See my Fable, No. XIII.)

But I conclude, for I cannot possibly prevail on myself to write a commentary upon my own attempts.

EPIGRAMS

SELECTED FROM THE

GERMAN OF LESSING.

L

EPIGRAMS.*

CUPID AND MERCURY, OR THE BARGAIN.

Sly Cupid late with Maia's son
Agreed to live as friend and brother ;
In proof, his bow and shafts the one
Chang'd for the well-fill'd purse of t'other.

And now, the transfer duly made,
Together through the world they rove ;
The thieving god in arms array'd,
And gold the panoply of love !

THE PER-CONTRA, OR MATRIMONIAL BALANCE.

How strange, a deaf wife to prefer !
True, but she's also dumb, good sir.

* The Translator is aware that several of these Epigrams are borrowed, or the thoughts slightly varied from similar compositions of previous authors ; but as they almost always receive a something distinctive from the peculiar mind of Lessing, they have not been rejected.

ON A MISERLY POET.

Why blame the wealthy bard, whose fame
Is ringing yet throughout the nation,
Because he hoards and scrapes?—for shame—
A poet's birthright is starvation.

Nicander, who fain would be reckon'd a wit,
In an epigram once made a capital hit ;
From that day to this he still puzzles his brain
To strike off a second as sharp, but in vain.
How often the bee, in its first fierce endeavour,
Leaves its sting in the wound, and is pointless for
ever !

THE ULTIMATUM.

When Jove for Europa abandon'd his skies,
He assail'd her each day in a diff'rent disguise ;
As a god he commenced, all effulgence and splendour—
Miss cock'd up her nose, and refus'd to surrender ;
As the loveliest of youths he display'd then his graces
In vain—the coy lady declin'd his embraces.—
As god and as man thus rejected, “ At least
I'll try once more,” quoth Jove—and prevail'd as a
beast.

SPECIMEN OF THE LACONIC.

"Be less prolix," says Grill. I like advice—
"Grill, you're an ass!" Now surely that's concise.

THE WISE CHILD.

How plain your little darling says "Mama,"
But still she calls you "Doctor," not "Papa."
One thing is clear: your conscientious rib
Has not yet taught the pretty dear to fib.

How oft Dame Frisky visits Doctor Pill!
Who would not think her husband really ill?

THE HEALTHY CONVENT.

Where can a more salubrious spot be found?
So pure the air, and so serene the skies;
Within these sacred walls' encircling round,
'Tis truly said, no virgin ever dies!

THE EPITAPH.

When to my grave my children's children come,
To drop the tear upon their grandsire's tomb,
Still may these lines of him who sleeps below,
Tell all they wish, and all they need to know :
" This dust that rests beneath, this silent dust,
In life was faithful, candid, plain, and just,
Unplaced, unpension'd, neither fool nor knave,
Was no man's tyrant, and was no man's slave."

THE ADVICE.

You ask me, " Shall I wed, or shall I tarry ?"
Do as your father did, boy,—never marry !
" That's a bad joke," you cry—Well, on matters so
 nice
As marriage and hanging, one can't give advice !

THE BARD.

Will thought he'd wit ; resolv'd to show it ;
So from a cobbler turn'd a poet.
Think you he's chang'd ?—Oh no, poor Will
Remains the same, and cobbles still.

ON THE STATUE OF CUPID.

Fly, ye who would preserve your peace, fly hence !
His seeming lifelessness is mere pretence.

ON THE SAME.

Nay, Chloe, gaze not on his form,
Nor think the friendly caution vain,
Those eyes the marble's self may warm,
And look him into life again.

MORNING CALLS.

My worthy friend Hans lives a mile off or more,
And complains that so seldom I knock at his door:
The fact is, where'er to his mansion I roam,
The answer's the same,—“ Sir, my master's from
home.”
Could I see him, the distance were trifling, no doubt ;
But I'd not walk ten steps to be told he is out.

THE BAD ORATOR.

So vile your grimace, and so croaking your speech,
One scarcely can tell if you're laughing or crying;
Were you fix'd on one's funeral sermon to preach,
The bare apprehension would keep one from dying.

TIMIDITY.

When I see the dark clouds gath'ring thick in the air,
In a bustle I straight to the cellar repair;
On account of the thunder, no doubt, you opine—
Oh no, my good friend!—on account of the wine.

ON LAIS.

Grim Pluto bade Death to our city repair,
And bear off Miss Lais, as frail as she's fair;
But Death, (who, though greedy as most people say,
Is a mighty economist too in his way,)
Replied, "Nay, dread Sire, that were wasteful and
wrong—
I seldom take doctors or doxies so young.

TO FUSKA.

Lament not, Fuska, for your head,
Nor view its ringlets with a frown,
For if your hair be fiery red,
Your skin, at least, is very brown.

ON DR. MEAD.

When Mead reach'd the Styx, Pluto started and said,
" Confound him ! he's come to recover the dead !"

Hans published satires upon me, you say,
Which vilify sorely my words and my deeds ;
Pooh, *publish* ?—poor Hans, let him scribble away,
That can scarce be call'd "*publish'd*" which nobody
reads.

ON THE HORSE OF FREDERICK WILLIAM, ON THE
BRIDGE AT BERLIN.

On me you gaze surpris'd, as though
You doubted if I breathe or no ;
Expectant half to see me stir—
Enough—I only wait the spur !

ON SEXTUS.

When to a nymph who wants an eye,
In wedlock Sextus plights his troth,
The gibing neighbours sneer and cry,
Sextus must sure be blind of both.

MR. KINZ AND MR. KUNZ.

KUNZ.

"Friend Kinz, I've heard grave people mention
Gunpowder as the devil's invention."

KINZ.

"Whoe'er inform'd you so was drunk ;
'Twas first invented by a monk."

KUNZ.

"Well, well—no matter for the name ;—
A monk—or devil—'tis much the same."

ON THE HANDSOME DAUGHTER OF A BAD POET.

The father writes to captivate mankind ;
Then who shall blame the charming daughter,
If, in her way, she's no less kind,
But follows the example taught her ?

ON THE SAME.

Your daughter, my friend, is a lovely brunette,
This envy must own, which all beauty asperses,
So lovely she makes one entirely forget
That her father is scribbling such d——nable verses.

THE DEVOTEE.

Far from the world, its noise and cares,
Its vices and alluring snares,
His strength worn out, decay'd his fires,
Old Sanctulus at length retires ;
Resolv'd the dregs of life to spend
Preparing for his latter end
In pious acts and meditations,
In holy thoughts and contemplations ;
Yet still the prying neighbours prate
Of twilight and his garden gate,
Hinting, with many a shrug and grin,
It lets a brisk young damsel in :—
Fie on the vile insinuation !
If so—'tis all for contemplation !

ON FELL.

While Fell was reposing himself on the hay,
A reptile conceal'd bit his leg as he lay ;
But, all venom himself, of the wound he made light,
And got well, while the scorpion died of the bite.*

ON DORILIS.

That Dorilis thus, on her lap as he lies,
Should kiss little Pompey, excites no surprise ;
But the lapdog whom thus she keeps fondling and
praising,
Licks her face in return—that I own is amazing !

ON A COTTAGE.

Robbers, avaunt ! beneath this thatch
Stern Poverty keeps strictest watch !

* But soon a wonder came to light,
Which show'd the rogues they lied,
The man recover'd of the bite,
The dog it was that died.

Goldsmith.

TO MESSRS. X. AND Y.

What a terrible flame in your bosoms you smother,
So loudly and fiercely you challenge each other !
'Tis lucky discretion such valour assuages ;
Each takes up the gauntlet, but neither engages !

ON MINNA.

In Minna's mind can goblins cause dismay,
Who in her glass beholds one ev'ry day ?

TO A SLOW WALKER AND QUICK EATER.

So slowly you walk, and so quickly you eat,
You should march with your mouth, and devour with
your feet.

ON THE GERMAN PASSION FOR PLAY.

The Germans of yore we find Tacitus blaming
For their fondness for play and devotion to gaming ;
When all else was lost, still their fortune to try,
Each would hazard himself on the chance of the die.
Is this true of the moderns ?—Why, not of the men ;
But the ladies still prove how correct was his pen !

THE DEAD MISER.

From the grave where dead Gripeall, the miser,
reposes,
What a villainous odour invades all our noses !
It can't be his *body* alone—in the hole
They have certainly buried the usurer's *soul*.

ON MNEMON.

What a wonderful memory Mnemon possesses !
His infantine sports, e'en his playthings and dresses,
How he sprinkled the maids, how he shot at the
sparrows,
His popgun of elder, his fine bow and arrows,
His kite and his marbles, his bat and his ball,
His cradle itself—he remembers them all !
There's one thing, at least, though he mentions it not,
So correct a chronologist can't have forgot ;
I allude to the days when his volatile mother
Was call'd by one name, and his sire by another.

THE OLD WIFE.

What ! marry Minna for her gold ?
 I dare not—Minna's grown so old ;
 Not but I might, perchance, be bolder,
 Were Minna but a few years older.

THE PSEUDO-MISER.

Observe how Fabullus, that crafty old hunk,
 Before people locks up his coffers and trunks !
 What, think you, 's the cause of this caution and care ?
 'Tis that none may discover how empty they are.

NIGER.

" He's gone at last—old Niger's dead !"
 Last night 'twas said throughout the city ;
 Each quidnunc gravely shook his head,
 And *half* the town cried, " What a pity !"

The news prov'd false—'twas all a cheat—
 The morning came the fact denying ;
 And *all* the town to-day repeat
 ! What *half* the town last night was crying.

FRITZ.

Quoth gallant Fritz, "I ran away
To fight again another day."
The meaning of his speech is plain,
He only fled to fly again.

THE BAD WIFE.

Scavans have decided, that search the globe round,
One only bad wife in the world can be found;
The worst of it is, as her name is not known,
Not a husband but swears that bad wife is his own.

BIRDS' NESTS.

"What is't you say? that in the east
The rich and great on birds' nests feast?
I know, indeed, that folks like these
Can almost dine on what they please;
That now a town, and now a nation,
Becomes, without much observation,
The food of these devouring guests."—
"That may be—they *begin* with nests."

TRUE NOBILITY.

Young Stirps as any lord is proud,
Vain, haughty, insolent, and loud,
Games, drinks, and in the full career
Of vice, may vie with any peer ;
Seduces daughters, wives, and mothers,
Spends his own cash, and that of others,
Pays like a lord—that is to say,
He never condescends to pay,
But bangs his creditor in requital—
And yet this blockhead wants a title !

THE PORTRAIT OF JUSTICE IN THE HOUSE OF A
CERTAIN JUDGE.

“ In what, great Jove, have I perform'd amiss,
To be expos'd in such a house as this ? ”

ON DORINDA.

By Dorinda's sweet face ev'ry bosom is warm'd,
But then her club-foot is so sadly deform'd !
What a singular change from her top to her toe—
She's an angel above, and a devil below !

M

ON IRIS.

The well-form'd snowy neck of Iris charms us,
But then, again, her Gorgon face alarms us.
Thus sunbeams oft peer out in cloudy weather,
Thus bane and antidote are found together.

ON AN INVITATION.

You ask, my good friend, twenty people to dine,
While I to not one of the number am known ;
Then wonder that I such a party decline ;
The fact is, I abominate dining alone.

A NICE POINT.

Say which enjoys the greater blisses,
John, who Dorinda's picture kisses,
Or Tom, his friend, the favour'd elf,
Who kisses fair Dorinda's self ?
Faith, 'tis not easy to divine,
While both are thus with raptures fainting,
To which the balance should incline,
Since Tom and John both kiss a painting.

THE POINT DECIDED.

Nay, surely John's the happier of the twain,
Because—the picture cannot kiss again !

TO A LIAR.

Lie as long as you will, my fine fellow, believe me
Your rhodomontading will never deceive me;
Though you took me in *then*, I confess, my good
youth,
When moved by caprice you once told me the truth.

ON A BACKBITER.

Alcander makes, you say, a stir,
And rails at me where'er I go—
It is the nature of a cur
To snarl at those he does not know.

ON THE DEATH OF A MONKEY.

Here Puggy lies, at length, in death reclin'd,
Who ever strove to imitate mankind;
His tricks are o'er, his simple grave is dug,
In *this* mankind must imitate poor Pug.

THE IMPEDIMENT.

Young Nicol, still fond of fine clothes and good cheer,
Often vow'd to get rich ere the end of the year :
And Nicol his word would have kept, I dare say,
If he had not been hang'd upon Midsummer-day.

ON A BATTLE PIECE.

How fine the illusion !—Bramarbas breath'd shorter,
When he saw it, fell prostrate, and roar'd out for
quarter.

REPENTANCE.

Bolus, whom conscience makes afraid,
To follow a less murd'rous trade
Resolves ; so quits his jars,
His gallipots, his draughts, and pills,
His lotions, potions, bark, and squills,
And lists in the hussars.

THE LIAR.

See yonder goes old Mendax, telling lies
To that good easy man with whom he's walking ;
How know I that ? you ask, with some surprise ;
Why, don't you see, my friend, the fellow's talking.

ESSAY ON EPIGRAM.

THE word Epigram is sometimes translated "Inscription ; but possibly it is better to use the original word itself, as " inscription " only describes what the epigram was in its origin, and refers to the source from which all epigrammatic poetry has been derived.

When Theseus erected a pillar on the Isthmus of Corinth, and wrote on the one side of it, " Here is not Peloponnesus, but Attica ;" and on the other, " Here is Peloponnesus, and not Attica," these words were the epigram, or inscription, on the pillar. How different, however, is such an epigram from those which we read in Martial. How little does such an inscription appear to possess in common with the epigram as at present considered.

Is there no reason for the gradual transformation of a simple intimation into a play of wit ; or is the cause not worth an investigation ?

Vavassor declares for the affirmative in both instances, (*De Epigrammata*, cap. 3.) “ Frustra videntur scriptores hujus artis fuisse, qui nos illud primum admonitos esse voluerunt epigrammata atque inscriptionem unum sonare.—Facile intelligimus mansisse vocem, mutato significationem ; et potestate vocis.”

It appears useless to him to commence a treatise on epigram with the original meaning of the word, it being evident to every one, that its present signification is very different. We retain the word, but have changed its meaning.

In the mean time, it is no less certain, that the employment of a particular word in a language is seldom without a direct motive, and that a thing which retains a certain name, will generally preserve some identity with that for which the term was originally invented.

What is the analogy in the present instance ? What share of identity has the most witty epigram of Martial with a simple inscription on an old monument, so that both should be known by the same name, among a people who, more than any other, have not allowed their language to become the sport of accident ?

This question is not the same as that asked by Scaliger, in the commencement of his chapter on epigrams : “ Quam ob causam Epigrammatis vox brevibus tantum poematiis propria facta est ? An propter ipsam brevitatem, quasi nihil esset preter ipsam inscriptionem ? An quæ statuis trophæis, imaginibus, pro elogiis inscribebantur ea primo veroque significatu Epigrammata sunt appellata ?” (*Poetices*, lib. iii. cap. 126.) Scaliger asks, “ why small poems only are called epigrams ?” This is implying that all small poems, without distinction, are so called, and not a certain class alone ; and I am therefore not satisfied with the answer of Scaliger. “ Perhaps,” he says, “ because they are so small, as to be little beyond a mere inscription ; or, possibly, because very small poems only were engraved on monuments, amounting, strictly speaking, to inscriptions.” This, as before observed, is assuming a fact, and rendering explanation superfluous ; for if it be true, that brevity by itself constitutes an epigram, the sarcastic notion of that Spaniard must be correct, who exclaimed, “ An epigram ! who is so stupid as not to be able to make an epigram ; or such a fool as to make more than one ?”

This therefore asserts nothing more than was assumed by me at the beginning of this inquiry—that the small poems originally engraved on

monuments were called epigrams ; which supplies no reason for giving the same name, at present, to small poems, which are neither fit, nor intended, to be inscribed on monuments.

I do not find that the modern writers on epigram have troubled themselves with this inquiry ; at least Mr. Boileau has not, who in his *Art. Poetiq.* Chant. ii. v. 103, observes, that an epigram is nothing else than a piece of wit, pointed and ornamented by a brace of rhymes. Neither has Mr. Batteux taken it into consideration, who defines an epigram to be an interesting thought, pointedly delivered in a few words. In neither the one nor the other of these definitions can I discover why an ably versified piece of wit, or a briefly delivered interesting thought, is to be called an inscription or an epigram ; unless I am to content myself by concluding, that any thought, briefly and ably expressed, deserves a place on a monument if it merits one any where else. It certainly is not the matter which justifies the name of epigram, as now applied, as it has long escaped confinement to the limits which are adapted to denote the origin and purpose of a monument ; and, at present, little more is required to extend it to any thing which may become a subject of human curiosity. It is in the form, therefore, that we must look for an answer to our

inquiry. It must be found in the parts, in the number and arrangement of these parts, and in the impression which a peculiar arrangement of parts infallibly produces. In these we must trace the cause why an epigram may still be called an inscription, although very seldom used as such.

An inscription cannot be imagined without reference to the place, or thing, on which it is or at least can be inscribed ; both together producing that impression which we usually attribute to the inscription alone—the material object excites our curiosity, and the inscription allays it. To whom, in the same manner, is it not obvious, that when they think of epigrams, whatever their number and variety, they regard each of them as containing the principal parts that are perfectly distinct from each other ; one of which excites attention or curiosity, which it is the province of the other to gratify ? On this simple circumstance will I venture to ground the whole explanation of epigram ; and, in the sequel, endeavour to ascertain whether, according to the explanation, the epigram is not distinguishable from all other small poems ; and whether all the qualities required by taste and criticism in an epigram, are not included in such explanation.

I repeat, therefore, that the epigram is a poem, ✓
in which, in the manner of an inscription, our

attention and curiosity are excited by some individual object, in respect to which we are more or less kept in suspense, in order to be the more piquantly gratified at the close.

When I say, "in the manner of an inscription," I include a consideration of the monument also, which corresponds with the first part of the epigram, as already mentioned, and I consider it necessary to repeat this observation before I proceed to develop and apply my explanation any further.

These two leading parts of an epigram, which I deem essential to its nature, have not been unobserved by all the writers on epigram; but the whole of them have neglected to trace this division to its origin, and have made no adequate use of their discovery. It only led Scaliger to adopt a twofold species of epigram. "*Epigrammata igitur est poema breve, cum simplici cujuspian rei, vel personæ, vel facti indicatione: aut ex propositis aliquid deducens, quæ definitio simul complectitur etiam divisionem nequis damnet prolixitatem.*" Because, in an inscription, he saw nothing beyond a simple notice of a person or an event, Scaliger deemed an epigram, in which there is a deduction from certain premises, and in which two distinct parts are perceptible, as something different from an inscription. The more refined perception, that the monument contributed its

share to the inscription, did not occur to him ; nor did he discover, that it represented that part in the epigram which excites attention, while the inscription itself answers to the other part which supplies the gratification of the excited curiosity. The copious Vavassor has also written a long chapter on the two parts of an epigram, which he calls the *explanation* and *conclusion*, in regard to which, he makes several useful observations. “Suntigitur partes epigrammatis duæ numero duntaxat, insignes ac primariæ, expositio rei et conclusio epigrammatis. In illo genere primo quod statuimus simplicis, et unius modi epigrammatis.” (Vide cap. 13. de partibus *Epigrammatis*.)

Mr. Batteux also expressly says, that “the epigram must have two parts ; the first of which must contain the introduction of the subject, and that which has produced the thought ; and the second, the thought itself, which forms the point, or that by which the reader is interested.” Notwithstanding this definition, the writer in question allows certain epigrams a place among his examples which have not all these parts, as, for instance :

Grandeur, savoir, renommé,
Amitié, plaisir, et bien,
Tout n'est que vent que fumée
Pour mieux dire tout n'est rien.

Friendship, pleasure, wealth, and fame,
Wit, and power, and noble name,
Are but mere bubbles, light and small,—
Smoke, wind, or rather nought at all.

Whatever thought these lines may contain, the origin of such thought is wanting. Where is the fact leading to the thought, on the part of the poet, and by which he conducts his readers to it also? The thought, or concluding part, is alone discoverable; and if, as this writer agrees, the epigram possesses two parts, then are these lines, and many more of the same sort, not epigrams.

Unfortunately, this is not a single unlucky instance, but it serves to show the faultiness of the explanation, according to which the epigram has to contain an interesting thought, delivered with brief felicity; for if it be possible to deliver a thought without advertence to the cause of it, as in the foregoing example, then will it want the proper parts of an epigram, and not be reducible to the definition even of the author himself who supplies it.

When we suddenly perceive a stately monument, mixed with the surprise caused by the beauty and grandeur of the structure, a species of anxiety arises to become acquainted with the purport of it, which lasts until we approach close enough to read the inscription, when a third pleasant feeling

is produced by the gratification of our curiosity. Such a series of impressions it is the object of the epigram to imitate ; and only in consequence of this imitation has it retained the name of epigram. In what manner, however, is the epigram to produce the impressions produced by the inscription, but by the adoption of the same form and order ? It must excite us to look for a single object, the foundation of which it endeavours to lay down with all possible clearness, and then satisfies our expectation in an unexpected manner. The two parts of an epigram may, therefore, most properly be called,—the first, that of *Expectation*,—the second, that of *Explanation* ; and I will proceed to look for them among some smaller poems, in order to discover the classification to which they belong. Naturally, there can be only two sorts of uncongenial epigrams, the one of which excites expectation without affording an explanation, while the other supplies explanation without having previously excited expectation.

I shall begin with the latter class, to which all those small poems in particular belong, which contain nothing beyond moral instruction or reflective observation. Such instruction, or observation, if it is deduced from some individual case, or is rendered applicable to something which has excited our curiosity, is very fit for the second part

of an epigram ; but, considered in itself, however wittily it be delivered, and however pointed in its conclusion, still it is no epigram, but simply a maxim, which, although excitable of admiration, cannot produce the series of impressions which are essential to the epigram. When Martial addresses the following to Decianus, (vide lib. i. ep. 9.)

Quod magni Thræseæ consummatique Catonis.
Dogmata sic sequeris, salvus ut esse velis :
Pectore nec nudo strictos incurris in enses
Quod fecisse velim te, Deciane facis.
Noli virum facili redimit qui sanguine famam
Hunc volo, laudari qui sine morte potest.

Consume Cato's and great Thrásia's strain,
As far as prudence goes, thou dost maintain,
And not thy breast on naked swords dost run ;
What men judge best, that, Decian, hast thou done.
He's not approv'd who cheaply dies for fame,
But without death who gets a glorious name ?

What do the last two lines in the original want to be called an interesting thought ? and could the latter be more shortly and happily expressed ? Would they, however, possess the same merit if taken separately, as they exhibit in connection with the preceding ones ? Will they, as a maxim simply, possess the same attraction, and produce the same impressions as they do now, when applied

to an individual case, which latter imparts to the former as much forcible conviction, as it receives from its beauty of illustration in return? Or suppose our Wernich, in order to recommend parsimony, had written :

Love gold, but first thy doubting soul assure
 'Tis poverty thou fliest, and not the poor.

The thought would have been interesting, if briefly and happily delivered; but would it not be still more so, if thus conveyed to the parsimonious Calidon?

Love gold no doubt thou dost, but then we're sure
 'Tis poverty thou fliest, and not the poor!

The difference is trifling, yet the former is, after all, nothing but a general precept; while the latter is a moving picture, full of life and animation—the former a maxim in verse, the latter an epigram. Nevertheless, both Mr. Wernich and Mr. Logan abound in misnamed inscriptions, which contain nothing more than general sentences; and although they are, and especially Wernich, inexhaustible in their excellencies, and dress out a simple moral axiom so as to resemble an epigram exceedingly, yet they will seldom deceive a fine taste, so as to altogether conceal the distinction. On the contrary, after reading

through a great number of these books, the man of taste will deem himself in company, at one and the same time, with a man of the world and a pedant; the first of whom talks of matters of experience, which lead to certain general truths, while the latter expatiates in sentences to which individual cases are yet to be applied. With no epigrammatist have I been more tired in this way than by Mr. Owen, in whom the pedant, who lashes himself into wit, is heard more frequently than the man of experience. That man must possess a strong head, who can read a whole volume of Mr. Owen at one time, without growing giddy. I always become so, and I account for it by the perusal of so many general conceptions, having no connection with each other, and which succeed one another without pause. The imagination endeavours to produce out of each of these an individual image or impression, and sinks under the effort.

To moralize forms no part of the object of MARTIAL, although most of his subjects are moral ones. I know of no Latin poet from whom fewer moral sentences can be taken. He has only a few epigrams, which, like that to Decianus, conclude with a general moral. His moral, in fact, is entirely interwoven with his subject, and he moralizes more by examples than

by words. The thirteenth epigram in his twelfth book, indeed, is as follows :

AD AUCTUM.

Genus, Aucte, lucri divites habent iram
Odisse quam donasse vilius constat.

This amounts to nothing beyond a fine observation, with an entire silence in regard to the occurrence which led to it : but of this sort there are not more than three or four in the whole of his epigrams ; and even in these it seems as if he, for certain reasons, left out the occasion, rather than that he had none. Auctus might be acquainted with some rich man, who artfully contrived a quarrel with himself, or the poet, in order to spare the necessity of a gift, which might, otherwise, have been expected. At least, Martial always addresses similar moral sentences to some particular person ; which apparent trifle Wernich and Logan should not have overlooked, for by attending to it they would certainly have enlivened their own observations. Although we neither know the persons addressed nor the precise reasons why they in particular are addressed, yet the mere selection of an individual puts us more on the alert, in order to discover, if within our own circle some one may not exist to whom the notion of the poet may be applied. If merely

general moral sentences are delivered, whether with the simplicity of a Cato, the subtlety of a Baudius, or the acuteness of a Wernich, they will never produce the effect which can alone entitle them to the name of epigrams. If therefore a Verinus, a Pibrack, or whatever else these honest men may be called, who have written sage and edifying distiches, are to be excluded from the roll of epigrammatists, those will be no less so, who have endeavoured to bring still more scientific truths within the limits of epigram. The verses of such may assist the memory, but they are certainly not epigrams, although, according to the definition of Mr. Batteux, it is difficult to refuse them the name. The medical prescriptions of the school of Salerno are very interesting; might they not be delivered with the graceful precision in which they are so much deficient? Yet, if even Lukrez himself were to undertake the task, it would only supply an additional proof that the definition of Mr. Batteux is too wide, and that it leaves out the mark which most essentially distinguishes the epigrams from all other small poems.

The second uncongenial sort of epigram, is that which excites expectation, without any explanation to answer it. Such are all the small poems which narrate a fact, without determining

the point of view from which it is to be considered, and therefore only inform us, that something has occurred that does not happen every day. To these may be added the small pieces which, like the "Emperors" of Ausonius, briefly comprehend the whole history and character of some person; of which sort so many have been produced under the titles of *Icones*, *Heroes*, &c. &c. These cannot be called epigrams, if only from their want of unity, which consists not in the identity of person, but of action. But even when they contain a single and complete action, they are not epigrams, if we are led into no conclusion. If, for instance, Martial had satisfied himself by including the history of Mutius Scævola in the following four verses :

Dum peteret regem decepta satellite dextra,
Injecit sacris se peritura focis
Sed tam sæva pius miracula non tulit hostis,
Et raptum flammis jussit abire virum.

Could we have then said that he had made an epigram? It would scarcely have been one had he added :

Urere quam potuit contempto Mucius igne.
Hanc spectare manum Porsenna non potuit.

for even this is nothing more than history ; it is rendered an epigram only by the concluding lines :

Major deceptæ fama est, et gloria dextræ ;
Si non errasset fecerat, illa minus.

For not until then do we perceive that the poet occupied our attention with the historical fact, in order to introduce and establish the fine observation, that a lucky failure will often effect the attainment of our purpose sooner than the best concerted plan. This inference, together with the pleasure afforded by the individual case from which it is deduced, forms the total interest of the above epigram.

We must undoubtedly be satisfied with only a part of this pleasure, in several pieces in the Grecian Anthology, and still more in those of certain moderns, who have fancied that it was only necessary to versify some old story in order to make an epigram. From the Anthology the following instance may be quoted :

Κοινή παρ κλισίη ληθαργικός ἦδε φρενοπληξ
Κείμενοι, ἀλλήλων νῆσον ἀπεσκεδάσαν.
Ἐξεθορε κλινῆς γὰρ ὁ τολμῆεις ὑπο λυσσῆς,
Καὶ τὸν ἀναισθητὸν παντὸς ἐτύπτε μένους.
Πληγαὶ δὲ ἀμφοτέροισ ἐγένοντ' ἄκος· αἷς ο μὲν
————— δατον
Ἐγρετο, τὸν δ' ὑπνῷ πάλυς ἐρίψε κόπος.

“ A madman and a lethargic person occupy the same bed, and the one became the physician of the other ; for the first, in his frenzy, beat the second out of his drowsiness, and rendered himself sleepy by the operation.” This is humorous, but nothing more. It by no means follows that both were cured, as the tendency to the sleep in the one was not removed, nor would sleep ensure the sanity of the other when he woke again. But even supposing the contrary, we are only where we were ; for the pleasure produced by a story which conveys nothing valuable, and which will only prompt a smile, is very slightly to be estimated. I trust that I shall not be reproached here with a deficiency of taste for Grecian simplicity ; for my objection is not that it too barely supplies its component parts, but that it wants some which are essential altogether. It is not the pointed conclusion which I miss here, but the general one for which the mere termination of the fact furnishes no substitute. For the same reason, I confess that I regard another very celebrated epigram as a mere fragment : I mean that on an Hermaphrodite :

Quum mea me genitrix gravida gestaret in alvo,
 Quid pareret, fertur consuluisse deos.
 Mars est, Phœbus ait : Mars, femina : Junoque neutrum.
 Quumque forem natus, Hermaphroditus eram.

Quærenti letum? Dea sic ait; occidet armis:
 Mars cruce: Phœbus aquis. Sors rata quæque fuit
 Arbor obumbrat aquas: adscendo, decedit ensis,
 Quem tuleram, casu labor et ipse super;
 Pes hæsit ramis, caput incidit omne: tulique
 Femina, vir, neutrum, flumina, tela crucem.

THE HERMAPHRODITE.

While erst imprison'd in the womb I lay,
 To learn my sex ere yet I saw the day,
 Oft would my mother to the shrines repair,
 And pour to various gods her anxious prayer.
 "The child shall prove a male," Apollo cried;
 "A female," the stern God of War replied;
 "Nor male nor female," Jove's imperial Bride.
 And soon, to prove these strange predictions right,
 Myself appear'd, a young Hermaphrodite.
 "How will it die?" became my mother's word,
 And Juno's dread reply was, "By the sword;"
 "It will be hang'd," said Mars; quoth Phœbus, "Drown'd;"
 And each response again correct was found:
 For climbing once a tree, whose leafy brow
 Flung its broad shadow o'er the lake below,
 I slipt, my rapier from the scabbard flew,
 And, as I fell, transfix'd my body through;
 Caught by the leg, awhile in air I swung,
 My head beneath the watery surface hung.
 Male, female, both, yet neither, thus I died,
 By hanging, by the sword, and by the tide.

The invention of this small poem is so ingenious, the expression so accurate, and yet so

elegant, learned critics cannot persuade themselves that it is a modern production ; for although M. de la Monnoye thinks he has proved that Pulex, to whom the manuscript assigns it, was not an ancient, but an author of the fifteenth century, this opinion is contrary to those of Politian, Scaliger, and many other writers. Mr Burman, junior, is inclined to think that this Pulex might himself have copied it from some ancient, as he is not known to have written any other poem. With all this, however, I have nothing to do ; whether ancient or modern, I cannot call this little poem an excellent epigram. There is no implied truth in it ; I cannot decide whether it is intended to praise or to blame the providence of the gods. Ought we to wonder, that among so many gods, all knew so much about the future, or that they did not know a great deal more ? Are we to conclude, that they would not reply more explicitly, or that they could not ; and that a fourth and still higher power so managed, that none of them should be compromised ? If the gods are introduced only as guessers, I exceedingly prefer the story of the Wine-tasters, in Don Quixote ; and notwithstanding the beauty of the verse, would rather have invented the latter than the former. The counterpart of stories, unqualified for the deduction of

any moral, are those in which the moral is so obvious, that it is superfluous to add it in express terms ; an instance of which is to be found in the Grecian Anthology, in the story of the Lame and the Blind :

*Ἄνερα τις λιπύγωνιον ὑπὲρ νωτοιο λιπαυγῆς
Ἦγε ποδας χρησας, ὀμματα χρησαμενος.*

A lame man on a blind man's shoulders begs :
Does he lend eyes or does he borrow legs ?

Or still more literally :

Thus he at once lends eyes and borrows legs.

Who is so short-sighted as not instantly to perceive the great truth deducible from this narrative ? And if so, is not a narrative which discloses so noble a truth in so elegant a manner, to be deemed an epigram ? This does not follow ; for why should it be called an epigram, when it is entitled to a more honourable appellation ? In fact, it is an apologue, or true Esopic fable ; for the brevity with which it is delivered by no means alters its nature, but, on the contrary, shows the manner in which the Grecians chose to deliver such fables. Besides the preceding, there are more of the same sort, to which there is nothing which bears a resemblance in the Esopic collec-

tion, but which deserves to be attached to it. Mr. Gellert was, therefore, very right in taking the blind and the lame for the subject of a fable, but he extended it too much, and was not so learned as to be acquainted with its origin.

The essential difference between a fable and an epigram is, that the parts which succeed each other in the epigram, are simultaneous in the fable, and are separable only in the abstract. The individual case in the fable cannot excite expectation, for the conclusion instantly follows. Fable, too, produces only an impression, and is not adapted to produce many in succession; but the epigram either rejects the cases in which the moral is at once conspicuous, or sets the moral aside, and calls attention to another which is equally deducible but less obvious; such being the only way left to renew expectation, when previously anticipated.

However, although expectation without gratification, or even both without a moral, cannot be said to constitute an epigram, yet all those epigrams are not to be rejected, in which the poet is only a narrator; for real occurrences still remain, which contain the succession of an epigram, or in which such succession can be formed by a slight declension. Thus, the heroic manner in which Arria in death preceded her husband, even in its

simple historical form, our poet Kleist found enough to construct a beautiful epigram. The "Pætus, it is not painful," bestows a sufficient conclusion. Martial, on the contrary, thought this sublime exclamation required ornament, and without adding it as poet, puts it into the mouth of Arria herself:

Casto suo gladium cum tradert Arria Pæto,
 Quem de visceribus traxerat ipsa suis:
 Si qua fides, vulnus; quod feci, non dolet, inquit:
 Sed quod tu facies, hoc mihi Pæte dolet.

When from her breast fair Arria drew the sword,
 And held it, reeking, to her much lov'd lord;
 Pætus, she cried, no pain oppresses me;
 My wound is nothing, but I feel for thee.

Without doubt, Martial deemed the *non dolet* too masculine, and rather wished to exhibit the tenderness of the attached wife, than simply a contempt for death. I attempt not to decide which of these epigrams is the best, as I only aim at showing how, by the aid of a little good versification, the inventive genius of the poet may produce a good epigram, without infringing upon historical truth.

But it is not in conformity with my definition alone, that epigrams are to be accurately distin-

guished from other small poems: more general explanations require similar precision; but, possibly, the attributes which render an epigram perfect, are better deducible from my definition than from any other.

If the first part of an epigram, which I have classed under the head of "Expectation," is to correspond with the monument on which an inscription is engraven, it must be evident that the former will be so much the more perfect, as it accords with a monument which is distinguished for beauty and grandeur. Above all things, however, it must conform to it in unity, so that we may perceive the purport at once, however in the way of description the poet may occasionally extend its limits. It may consist as well in five or six words as in so many lines, as for instance, read the following epigram of Naugirius:

DE PYTHAGORO SIMULCRO.

Quem toties vixisse anima redeunte renatum
Mutato fama est corpora Pythagoram:
Cerne, iterum ut docti cœlo generatus Asylæ
Vivat, ut antiquum servet in ore decus.
Dignam aliquid certe volvit: sic fronte severa est:
Sic in se magno pectore totus abit.
Posset et ille altos animi depromere sensus:
Sed veteri abstrictus religione, silet.

In this epigram, the first six lines calling for

attention are simply a description of the subject; and what is here said in six lines, the Grecian original expresses in a few words. (Vide *Anthologica*, lib. iv. cap. 33.)

Αὐτον Πυθαγορην ὁ ζωγραφος· ὃν μετα φωνης
Εἶδες ὦν, εἶγε λαλειν ἤθελε Πυθαγορης.

Faustus Sabæus translates it thus :

Pythagoram pictor poterat finxisse loquentem
Verum Pythagoram conticuisse juvat.

And we may render it in one line :

Why speaks it not? It is Pythagoras.

However, neither Naugirius nor the Grecian seems to exhibit the exact quality which the part of an epigram exciting expectation ought to possess; but another Grecian, who adopted the same thought, has rendered it complete, not like Naugirius with mere expletive, but by a correction of the thought itself. It was impossible to take for granted, with Naugirius and the above recited Greek, that Pythagoras was always silent, although silence was a practical exercise in his school. How much more beautiful, therefore, is the following of Julianus :

Οὐ τον ἀναπτυσσοντα φυσιν πολυμητιν ἀριθμῶν
 Ἦθελεν ὁ πλαστής Πυθαγόρην τελεσαι,
 Ἀλλὰ τον ἐν σιγῇ πιτυτοφρονί και ταχα φωνην
 Ἐνθην ἀποκρυπτει και τοδ' ἔχων ὀπασαι.

Vide *Anthol.* l. c.

“ This is not Pythagoras explaining the secret nature of numbers, but Pythagoras in the wisdom of his silence.”

The general rule, therefore, to be observed, in reference to the extent of that part which contains the expectation is, that we are not, for the sake of making a few verses more, to expatiate like a schoolboy, but to attend to the solution, and ask ourselves, what is to be gained in clearness and force by the extension of the part preceding ?

There are cases in which every thing depends on this extension ; and to such, in particular, those epigrams belong, in which the conclusion refers to a relative notion ; as, for instance, those in which something is represented as a maximum or a minimum, and where, in consequence, the measure of the said magnitudes must, in the first place be exhibited, and a gradation, either of great or small, be frequently repeated. If Martial had only written the following lines on a small estate presented to him by a friend, it would still have been an epigram :

Donasti, Lupe, rus sub urbe nobis :
 Sed rus est mihi majus in fenestra
 Hoc quo tempore prædium dedisti,
 Mallem te mihi prandium dedisses.

How much more whimsical and pointed, however, is the same epigram rendered by the introduction of still smaller comparative measures and diminutives, than that of a small garden seen from a window. As for instance :

Donasti, Lupe, rus sub urbe, nobis :
 Sed rus est mihi majus in fenestra
 Rus hoc dicere, rus potes vocare !
 In quo ruta facit nemus Dianæ,
 Argutæ tegit ala quod cicadæ,
 Quod formica die comedit uno.
 Clausæ cui folium rosæ corona est ;
 On quo non magis invenitur herba,
 Quam costi folium, piperve crudum ;
 On quo nec cucumis jacere rectus,
 Nec serpens habitare tota possit.
 Erucam male pascit hortus unam,
 Consumpto moritur culex salicto,
 Et talpa est mihi fossor atque arator.
 Non boletus hiare, non mariscæ
 Ridere, aut violæ patere possunt.
 Fines mus populatur, et colono
 Tanquam sus Caledonius timetur ;
 Et sublata volantis ungue Procnæ
 In nido seges est hirundinino
 Et cum stet sine falce, mentulaque,

Non est dimidio locus Priapo
 Vix implet cochleam peracta messis,
 Et mustum nuce condimus picata.
 Errasti, Lupe, litera sed una :
Nam quo tempore prædium dedisti,
Mallem tu mihi prandium dedisses.

TO LUPUS.

A farm thou gay'st me, joining to the town—
 My window holds one of as much renown.
 This a farm call you? This a farm d'ye say?
 A tuft of rue Diana's grove you may
 As well suppose: for any thing 'twill pass;
 Spice it affords as much as herbs or grass.
 An emmet in one day would eat it bare,
 An earwig starve outright for want of fare;
 In it a violet cannot blow and spread,
 Much less a mushroom raise its spacious head,
 Nor cucumber lie straight upon the ground,
 Or snake conceal itself from being found.
 A single mole both digs and plows the soil,
 A wretched mouse doth all lay waste and spoil,
 And by my hind is apprehended more
 Than Caledonia fear'd the enraged boar:
 All that the yearly harvest does afford,
 A swallow in her little nest may hoard,
 Bear the whole produce in her claw or bill,
 Nor will my vintage a pitch'd nutshell fill.
 Mistaken words thy deed of gift do frame,
 And a mere molehill mounts and meadows name.

ANONYMUS.

These hyperbolic epigrams, as they may very properly be called, have often a peculiar charm. They ought not, however, to consist of mere hyperbole, like the following :

Ἄγρον Μηνόφανης ὠνήσατο, καὶ διὰ λιμὸν
 Ἐκ δρυὸς ἀλλοτρίας ὤντον ἀπηγχονισεν.
 Γῆν δ' αὐτῷ τεθηνῶτι βαλεῖν οὐκ εἰσχὸν ἀνώθεν,
 Ἄλλ' ἔταφ' ἰσθ' ἰσθ' πρὸς τινα τῶν ὁμορῶν.
 Εἰ δ' εἴδω τὸν ἄγρον τὸν Μηνόφανος Ἐπικουροῦ,
 Πάντα γεμῖν ἄγρων εἶπεν ἄν, ἐκ ἁτομῶν.

“Menophanes has bought a field, but must hang himself in the next tree from hunger. He possesses not sufficient soil to cover his own corpse, and his burying-place must be purchased out of the neighbouring ground. Had Epicurus seen the field of Menophanes, he would have said that the universe is full of fields instead of atoms.”

Now this epigram evidently consists of expectation alone, and instead of a conclusion or solution, we arrive at an extreme. Such like plays of wit may excite laughter, but something more is required for the construction of an epigram. In the Grecian Anthology, hyperbolic epigrams abound, but in Martial very seldom. The latter always proceeds from the hyperbole to an observation, which contains something beyond it. As for instance :

AD PAULUM.

De prætoricia folium mihi, Paule, corona,
 Mittis, et hoc phialæ nomen habere jubes
 Hac fuerat nuper nebula tibi pegma perunctum
 Pallida quam rubri diluit unda croce?
 An magis asturi derasa est ungue ministri
 Bractea de fulcro, quod reor esse; tuo?
 Illa potest culicem longe sentire volantem
 Et minimi penna papilionis agi.
 Exiguæ volitat suspensa vapore lucernæ
 Et leviter fuso rumpitur ista mero.
 Hoc linitur sputo Jani cariota Calendis,
 Quam fert cum parvo sordidus esse cliens.
 Lenta minus gracili crescunt colocasia filo:
 Plena magis nimio lilia sole cadunt:
 Nec vaga tam tenui discursat aranea tela:
 Tam leve nec bombyx pendulus urget opus.
 Crassior in facie vetulæ stat creta fabullæ:
 Crassior offensæ bulla tumescit aquæ.
 Fortior et tortos servat vesica capillos,
 Et mutat Latias spuma Batava comas.
 Hac cute Ledæo vestitur pullus in ovo:
 Talia lunata splenia fronte sedent.
 Quid tibi cum phiala, ligulam cum mittere posses:
 Mittere cum posses vel cochleare mihi?
 Magna nimis loquimur, cochleam cum mittere posses:
 Denique cum posses mittere, Paule, nihil.

TO PAULUS.

Rapt from the Prætor's crown, a leaf you send,
 To which, fond Paul, a phial's name you lend.

O

With such a cloud was late thy pageant swell'd,
Which yellow crocus' paly wave dispell'd?
Or was it pick'd, as I should shrewdly dread,
By slave's sly talon, from thy pompous bed?
A gnatling's wing gives all its frame to sigh;
It feels afar the baleful butterfly.
A lampling's steam the flying vase sustains;
The wine's most light infusion bursts its veins.
Such foil upon his date the client flings
At Janus' calends, when his bribe he brings.
With less fine fibres filmy beans are spun:
Far ampler lillies flag before the sun.
No toils so slim the vagrant web extends:
From work so slight no silken grub depends.
On old Fabulla's face, much thicker dwells
The white; more dense th' offended bubble swells;
More strong the film that binds the tortur'd hair;
More strong the ley that makes the Latian fair.
With skin like this a Leda's chick is clad;
Such band forbids the spleen-sick to run mad.
Why mock me with your phial, pert buffoon,
When you could send a ladle or a spoon;
Nay less: could send a snail, or cockle, Paul;
In fine, when you could—nothing send at all?

ELPHINSTONE.

All these hyperbolic similes the poet adopts, not for their own sake or pleasantry, but in order to instruct certain great people, who attach considerable obligation to the gift of a trifle bestowed by them. How much better it would be to give nothing at all, it not being generosity but avarice,

or the desire of purchasing a feeling of gratitude with that which deserves it not. But to return : in the same manner as an able versifier will extend the first part of an epigram, in consequence of the ease with which he can do so, an unskilful one will often cut it too short, by including the whole of it in the title, and versifying only the latter part ; and strange to say, some critics have even recommended this mode of construction. These, however, have omitted to consider, that what an epigram thus gains in brevity, it loses in another way, by the heterogeneous nature of its composition. The epigram is by Mr. Kleist :

ON TWO BEAUTIFUL ONE-EYED SISTERS.

Give up one eye, and make your sister's two,
Venus she then would be, and Cupid you.

I do not, for the reason above-mentioned, regard this epigram as equal in beauty to the Latin one of Hieronymus Amaltherus :

Lumine Alcon capto est Lucilla sinistro
Et potis est forma vincere uterque deos
Blande puer, lumen, quod habes concede, puellæ
Sic tu cæcus Amor, sic erit illa Venus.

Sweet boy and girl, with form divine,
And each an eye depriv'd of light :
Gay boy, that lucid orb of thine,
Thy sister give, to set things right :
Two gods we then shall quickly see ;
Thy sister Venus, Cupid thee.

ANONYMOUS.

The latter may spare the title, but the former would not be understood without it ; and thus the fine epigram becomes a mere inscription. I do not recollect a single epigram of Martial which is so defective as to require assistance from the title ; *To, From, and On*, alone precede his epigrams, with the addition of the party addressed, or of him who forms the subject of them.

All the *Lemmata*, which are to be found in the later editions of Martial, are not original, but belong to the different copyists, and therefore vary in different editions. Every circumstance, even the smallest, which is essential to the full understanding of his epigrams is contained therein, or if any thing therein is not obvious at present, it was so when the poet wrote.

If it be granted that the second part of an epigram, which I have called the solution, ought to correspond with the inscription, which finally clears up our curiosity in regard to the object of an admired monument ; it only remains for us to consider the reasons why such an inscription

should be as short as possible, in order to deduce from it the fact, that brevity is also the first and principal qualification in the solution of an epigram. In respect to monumental inscriptions, the reasons are these : in the first place, monuments are, or ought to be, erected to persons, or events, of considerable renown ; and, moreover, the public places in which they are situated are not constructed for the occupation of a few idle loungers, but for the busy passenger, who has no time to ponder over a long inscription. It is also precisely for readers like these passers by, that epigrams are chiefly constructed ; persons whose engagements will allow only of hasty glances into books. Such readers wish to acquire with expedition, but yet satisfactorily, which cannot be the case if entertained only with common places, or matters entirely unknown to them. A deficiency of brevity in the solution is, however, the fault of few epigrammatists, as it is usually for a selected point that the epigram is constructed. Sometimes, indeed, it happens, that a writer has thought of nothing else ; in which case it usually resembles a picklock, which may be applied to every lock alike.

It is often, in respect to the latter part, or solution of an epigram, that the best poets are most deficient, and this owing to a superabundance

of wit and acuteness. It often happens, that while writing, another solution will occur to them besides that which they originally intended, and this either before they can arrive at the latter, or afterwards, which discovery they are not inclined to allow to remain profitless. A something of this appears to have happened to Martial, in the following epigram :

IN LIGURINUM.

Occurrit tibi nemo quod libenter,
 Quod, quacunq̃ue venis, fuga est et ingens
 Circa te, Ligurino, solitudo :
 Quid sit scire cupis ? nimis poeta es.

TO LIGURINUS.

That every one, to meet thee, is afraid,
 And where thou com'st a solitude is made :
 Would'st Ligurinus know the reason why ?
 Too much a poet, men thy presence fly.

Who can deny that these four lines form a perfect epigram ? only, that the words “ nimis poeta ” appeared to Martial somewhat problematical, and he perceived beyond it another point, which induced him to make the first a mere stage to a further object. He then proceeds :

Hoc valde vitium periculosum est
 Non tigris catulis citata raptis,
 Non dipsas medio perusta sole,
 Nec sic scorpius improbus timetur.

Nam tantos, rogo, quis ferat labores?
 Et stanti legis, et legis sedenti
 Currenti legis, et legis cacanti.
 In thermas fugio : sonas ad aurem,
 Piscinam peto : non licet natare.
 Ad cœnam propero, tenes euntem
 Ad cœnam venio : fugas sedentem
 Lassus dormio : suscitās jacentem,
 Vis, quantum facies inali, videre?
 Vir justus, probus, innocens timeris.

TRANSLATION.

And this, I tell thee, is a dang'rous crime,
 A scorpion is not fear'd like ceaseless rhyme,
 An adder, in the scorching sun, fresh sprung,
 A tiger newly robbed of her young.
 For prithee, who such tediousness can bear?
 Thou read'st to those who sit or standing are :
 E'en Cloacina, has no sacred place,
 Thou wilt intrude with thy unwelcome face.
 The baths too, people cannot wash them there,
 For thee reciting verses in their ear.
 They haste to sup, the goers thou dost stay ;
 Who'd sup with thee, thou readest them away ;
 Weary and sick, they lay them down to sleep,
 Thy verses rouse them, and then waking keep.
 Would'st know what mischief this to thee has bred ?
 Though good, and learn'd, and just, all do thee dread.

Who has a right to complain of a poet, for supplying two points to one epigram, especially, when they suit each other so well as in the given instance, in which the one in no way in-

fringes on the other. It would, however, be very improper to form a rule from these beautiful excrescences, and to decide as Scaliger has done, that an epigram excels when it consists of many smaller epigrams. However, his own instance of an "*Epigrammata differto*," by no means proves it to be the best, for although it contains four more, they are by no means better than they should be. It is on a gouty patient, for whom the starving system of cure is prescribed :

Heus utrum eligimus ? Si non nisi dente podagra
 Dente famis diræ discruciata perit
 Ah nequeam, nisi sic, finire, dolore doloram ?
 Atque ferum finem, tollere fine truci
 Heu macie informi, larvata heu, tabe furorem
 Et funus plus quam funere præveniens
 O vitam invitam ; O incommoda commoda : lux nox !
 Si, ne aliquid fias, cogeris esse nihil.*

It is astonishing how blind the most learned men may become when led to deduce any thing from their own example. This epigram which is to contain four epigrams, scarcely amounts to one. Its vapid

* This cannot be translated with a preservation of the original pun and equivocal, and consequently no translation is supplied.

solution is swelled out by each additional line like a swoln out bladder, which at last explodes, and produces wind alone.

Mr. Wernich is more explicit in the construction of these compressed epigrams. In theory he entirely agrees with Scaliger, for he defines epigram to be a composition in which the reader has to pause on each line until imperceptibly led to the conclusion; a definition which omits the unity which is necessary to every epigram.

Again: if the two parts of an epigram have to coincide with the monument and its inscription, then the proportion which exists between the two latter must also be found in the two former; which amounts to this, that in beholding the monument we may at least be enabled to guess at the tenour of the inscription. Thus a monument, the appearance of which excites a sentiment of melancholy, will not be expected to contain a comic inscription, and *vice versâ*. In the same manner, that part of the epigram which tends to excite expectation, ought to lead us to anticipate the tenour of the solution; so that we may not be surprised and offended by a disagreeable contrast. I do not, however, include in this observation every unexpected transition from great to small, or black to white, which may occasionally be agreeable, and excite to laughter, if our feelings are not

wounded by such contrast. As, for instance, the following by Scarron :

Superbes monumens de l'orgueil des humains !
 Pyramides, tombeaux dont la vaine structure
 A témoigné que l'art, par l'adresse des mains,
 Et l'assidu travail, put vaincre la Nature !
 Vieux palais ruinés, chef-d'œuvres des Romains,
 Et les derniers efforts de leur architecture,
 Colisée, où souvent ces peuples inhumains,
 De s'entr'assassiner se donnoient tablature !
 Par l'injure des ans vous êtes abolis
 Ou du moins la plupart vous êtes démolis !
 Il n'est point de ciment que le tems ne dissoude.
 Si vos marbres si durs ont senti son pouvoir,
 Dois-je trouve mauvais qu'un méchant pourpoint noir,
 Qui m'a duré deux ans, soit percé par le coude ?

TRANSLATION.

Ye monuments superb of human pride ;
 Ye towering pyramids by Nilus' side !
 Ye tombs immense, like mountains on the plain,
 That make encroachments upon nature's reign !
 Ye ruined palaces ! ye temples hoar !
 Where heroes dwelt, or bow'd down to adore.
 In mighty Rome, magnificent and dread,
 Where Architecture rais'd her marble head !
 And thou, vast pile, that Architecture's boast,
 Whose walls extensive might enclose a host ;
 Gigantic Coliseum ! where of old,
 The Roman stern beheld the conflict bold,
 Of gladiators drench'd in human blood ;
 Who to the death in barbarous manhood stood !

Ye, for most part, have felt the touch of time ;
 Mould'ring your architraves, and fronts sublime ;
 Levelling your beauteous shafts, and marble domes,
 Mid falling temples and decadent tombs !
 No cement can resist Saturnus' power,
 Offspring of Time is all, and all he does devour.
 If then your during stone and marble pass
 Away, as from the mead the waving grass,
 Ought I to murmur that my old black coat
 Is out at elbows and not worth a groat ?

It is now time to consider, under a general point of view, those epigrams in which our expectation is rather amused, and agreeably deceived, than satisfied.

Some readers will still look for the most efficient part of that which is to be said concerning epigram. Hitherto it has been defined a small witty poem only, without allusion to the sources of its wit. I have made the entire beauty and strength of an epigram to consist in first *exciting* and then *satisfying* expectation, without adverting to the manner in which such satisfaction is to be obtained. What the Romans call *acumina*, and the French *pointes*, I have neither insisted upon nor rejected.

If by acumen or point nothing more be intended than the thought for which expectation is excited, then it is evident that no epigram can

exist without it, and that it forms the true criterion of an epigram; but if by those words be meant only the mere play of wit produced by a certain arrangement of words, the question is, whether such point be necessary—or what amounts to the same thing—whether a debt may be paid in adulterate coin when the genuine is not forthcoming. In the same manner, as a deficiency of sterling coin leads to the production of a base metal, so will a paucity of genuine wit and spirit lead to a substitution of something which may resemble them; the receivers of which substitutes may be deemed fortunate if the resemblance be striking, and the intrinsic value not too much deteriorated.

To such coins, which are neither altogether good nor valueless, I will venture to compare two sorts of epigrams; which, although not perfect, have always found admirers among people of taste. By the one I mean those which deceive us in regard to the expectations excited; and by the other, those which are defective or ambiguous in reference to the solution. I will add a word or two on each.

Every thing new surprises merely because it is so; and although it is not pleasant, in consequence of its surprising only, yet it is evident that the simple surprise is in itself agreeable. If,

therefore, it is not in the power of the poet to surprise us with something altogether new in the solution of his epigram, who can blame him if he endeavours to give a common one a turn which will startle us. This, however, can be effected only by deception ; because the poet cannot give the reader that which he anticipates, he strives to prevent him looking for that which is to follow. He appears, for instance, to be anxious to praise, and ends in blaming ; and so on, satisfied if the reader only miss his object. One example of this from Martial :

IN SANCTRAM.

Nihil est miserius, nec gulosius Sanctra
 Rictam vocatus cum cucurrit ad cœnam,
 Quam tot diebus noctibusque captavit :
 Ter poscit apri glandulas, quater lumbum,
 Et utramque coxam leporis, et duos armos :
 Nec erubescit pejeraræ de turdo,
 Et ostreorum rapere lividos cirros,
 Buccis placentæ sordidam linit mappam
 Illic et uvæ collocantur ollares
 Et punicorum pauca grana malorum
 Et excavatæ pellis indecens vulvæ
 Et lippa sicus, debilisque boletus,
 Sed mappa cum jam mille rumpitur furtis,
 Rosos tepenti spondylos in sinu condit
 Et devorato capite turturem truncum,
 Colligere longa turpe nec putat dextra

*Analecta quicquid et canes relinquerunt
 Nec esculenta sufficit gulæ præda,
 Misto lagenam replet ad pedes vino.
 Hæc per ducentas cum domum tulit sealas,
 Seque obserata elusit anxius cella,
 Gulosus ille postero die—vendit.*

TO SANCTRA.

When Sanctra long had rul'd in dreams,
 And fed his waking mind with future steams ;
 To the still panted, pray'd, pursu'd, repast,
 Him the dear invitation blest at last.
 But oh ! poor Sanctra, wast thou blest or curst,
 When on the gorgeous board thine eyeballs burst ?

The kernels of the boar he thrice demands :
 The loin he four times hints he understands.
 To the hare's either hip his spirit springs ;
 And flutters now to fly on both the wings.
 His soul he perjures for a glorious thrush ;
 He beards the oysters ; but he will not crush.
 With comfits next, behold his napkin grac'd :
 In the same hoard, the potted grapes are plac'd.
 Here a few grains of punic apples lie ;
 And there a skin, just scoop'd from out a sty.
 Nor is the blear-ey'd fig herself forgot ;
 Nor here forgets the mushroom mash'd to rot.
 When the stretch'd cloth, by many a hundred rents,
 Bewrays a thousand thefts, a thousand scents :
 The half-gnaw'd bones he fosters in his breast,
 Where not the headless dove disdains to rest.
 Nor does his dext'rous hand abhor the theft,
 Of the last offals which the dogs have left.

But lo ! he fills, suffic'd not thus to eat,
 With mingled wine, the flaggon at his feet.
 When all ten score of stairs he home has rais'd ;
 And every power, that lent him power, has prais'd.
 His treasure he unlocks ; and strange to tell,
 Next morn he condescends—the whole to *sell*.

ELPHINSTONE.

Until the last word of this epigram we are led to expect something quite different from that which we arrive at. We are first induced to regard Sanctra as an epicure, but at length discover that he only collects all these delicacies, in order to sell them, in order to procure the more essential requisites of life. The frequent use made of this mode of surprise it is unnecessary to mention ; but it is thus recommended by Cicero. (*Vide de Oratore, lib. 2. c. 63.*) *Scites esse notissimum ridiculi genus, cum aliquid expectamus aliud dicitur. Hic nobis metipsis noster error risum movet. Cicero adds, Quod si admixtum est etiam ambiguum, fit falsius.* This would form the second sort of epigram, to which I above alluded ; for it is the necessary condition of an equivoque, or ambiguity, that it should be unexpected. It is unnecessary to define an equivoque, I will therefore only add that it should not be carried so far as to render the risible tendency forced and languid. The equivoque is not to excite laughter for the mere risu

diducere rictum, but may often form the soul of the finest mirth, and add grace to energy. Ex ambigua dicta, Cicero also observes, vel argutissima putantur, sed non semper in joco ; sæpe in etiam in gravitate versantur. If the equivoque be something more than a mere play of words, then it has a double sense, the one of which is true in itself ; and the other, although false, serves to lead to or confirm it ; but I need dwell no longer on a subject on which so much has been said already.

I shall therefore here finish these general observations on epigram, and having once quoted Cicero, I cannot do better than conclude with a passage from that great Roman authority, which may be addressed to those readers who deem all investigation into the principles which govern works of wit to be useless. Ego in his preceptis hanc vim et hanc utilitatem esse arbitror, non ut ad reperiendum, quid dicamus, arte ducamur, sed ut ea, quæ natura, quæ studio, quæ exercitatione, consequimur aut recta esse confidamus, aut prava intelligamus, cum quo referenda sint, didicerimus. (De Oratore, lib. 2. cap. 57.

FINIS.